Price $3.00

FIRST THINGS

November 1990
Number Seven

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Literature and Moral Purpose
Robertson Davies

The Christian West?
Wolfhart Pannenberg & Richard John Neuhaus

Racism and the Radical Paradigm
David Horowitz

1789: A Requiem
John P. Sisk

Telling the American Catholic Story
George Weigel

Also: Learning from the Cold War • The Uses of Homophobia • Paul Greenberg Remembers Walker Percy • The Evolution Debate Continued

Reviews and Opinion: Jean Bethke Elshtain • Edward Krause Marc F. Griesbach • Mary Ann Glendon • Daniel Mahoney • Joseph Schwartz

0 73361 64655 2 11

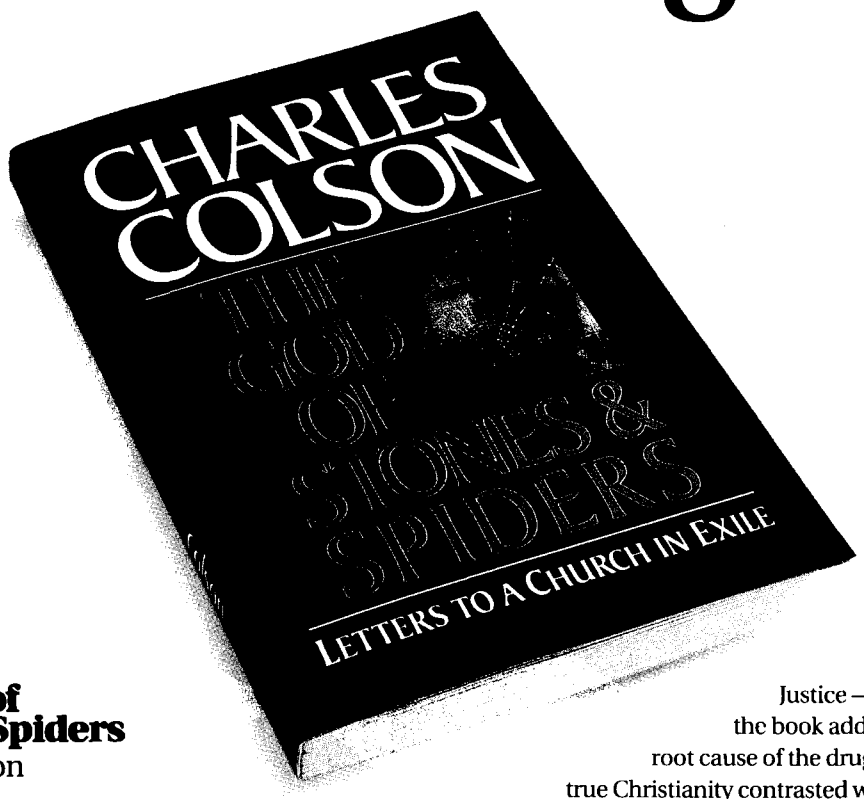
Featuring

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The prophetic voice against a new dark age.



The God of Stones & Spiders
Charles Colson

It is often noted that we live in a post-Christian society, an age when the Christian gospel is scorned, when ethical absolutes are regarded as obsolete, when evil is called good and good evil. In his provocative book, *The God of Stones and Spiders*, Charles Colson speaks to these and other difficult issues facing Americans today. With rare insight, Colson looks at what happens to a culture that has lost what Alan Bloom identified as a common standard of beauty, truth, and goodness.

Divided into four parts — Government & Public Policy, Culture, The Church, and Prisons and Criminal Justice — the book addresses the root cause of the drug problem, true Christianity contrasted with the "celebrity illusion," and why prisons don't *and can't* rehabilitate. These stirring reflections show once again that Charles Colson is one of a very few true prophetic voices among current American leaders.

Charles Colson holds a BA degree from Brown University and a JD degree from George Washington University. Formerly special counsel to President Nixon, he served time in prison for his role in Watergate. He is now chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, an international prison outreach, and is a widely respected author, lecturer, and speaker.

At your local bookstore.

Crossway Books

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

NOVEMBER 1990 • NUMBER SEVEN

CORRESPONDENCE 2 *James Redding, Eugene Rochberg-Halton, Ronald F. Marshall*

EDITORIALS 4 Learning from the Cold War, The Uses of Homophobia

OPINION 7 *Jean Bethke Elshtain* Nature's Call, *Mary Ann Glendon* Notes on the Culture Struggle: Dr. King in the Law Schools, *Marc F. Griesbach* An Open Letter on Abortion, *Paul Greenberg* Binx and the Malaise

ARTICLES 15 *Robertson Davies* Literature and Moral Purpose

24 *Wolfhart Pannenberg and Richard John Neuhaus* The Christian West?

32 *David Horowitz* The Radical Paradigm and the New Racism

36 *John P. Sisk* 1789: A Requiem

43 *George Weigel* Telling the American Catholic Story

RESPONSE 50 *Phillip E. Johnson* A Reply to My Critics: The Evolution Debate Continued

BOOKS 53 *Daniel Mahoney* Confronting the Constitution edited by Allan Bloom; *Edward Krause* The Jesuits and the Third Reich by Vincent A. Lapomarda; *Joseph Schwartz* Conversations with Tom Wolfe edited by Dorothy Scura, Conversations with John Gardner edited by Allan Chavkin; Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 61 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life by *Richard John Neuhaus*

Poetry by *E. Castendyk Briefs* (23, 73), *Charles Vandersee* (31), and *Camille S. Williams* (42)

Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*
Poetry Editor: *Nathan A. Scott, Jr.*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Services: *Publishing Management Associates*

First Things (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Things, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870.

Copyright ©1990 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of public life. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Peter Berger
Stanley Hauerwas
Gertrude Himmelfarb
David Novak
Michael Novak
George Weigel

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Hadley Arkes
Walter Berns
Brigitte Berger
James Burtchaell
David Dalin
Thomas Derr
Jean Bethke Elshtain
James Finn
Ernest Fortin
Suzanne Garment
Mary Ann Glendon
Bruce Hafen
Carl F. H. Henry
Russell Hittinger
Leonid Kishkovsky
Christopher Lasch
Glenn Loury
Paul Seabury
Max Stackhouse

Correspondence

Against Androgyny

It was disconcerting to read in David Blankenhorn's ten suggestions for thinking about the family (August/September), no. 4: "Recognize that the American family dilemma is androgynous." This idea has been one of the strongest causes of the dilemma we're talking about.

As George Gilder cogently argued in *Sexual Suicide,* motherhood is a biological reality, fatherhood a social construct. The only way a man can be persuaded to be a part of a family is if he has a role which is more than just a pale carbon-copy of the mother's. Most men are aware that the most important chores of family life, giving birth and nursing, are not androgynous; they can be performed only by a woman. What job today can be done only by a man?

It is precisely all those "new opportunities for women in the workplace and in public life" that have undermined what used to be the rationale behind "fatherhood." Is it any wonder that more and more men want no part of it? . . .

James Redding
Granville, NY

Newspeak Revisited

Your editorial on "Post-Cold War Newspeak" (June/July) claimed that I "employed deception" in my *New York Times* op-ed piece, where I proposed a sardonic monument to the American victims of the Cold War. My piece was more specifically concerned with the American side of the secret nuclear war conducted by the United States and the Soviet Union against their own populations in the name of national security. Current estimates strongly suggest that more than 300,000 Americans, mostly children, have died due to the effects of nuclear bomb testing. This exceeds the number of Americans killed in the Korean and Vietnam wars combined. Deliberate deception was employed by our government against the American public and against any scientists courageous enough to release information showing the deadly probabilities.

A flood of materials is being released to show how thousands of American families living near bomb-making factories and reactors, such as those in Fernald, Ohio, and Hanford, Washington, were exposed to appallingly high levels of radiation while the government of the United States officially employed deception by claiming that there was no health hazard—even though it very well knew the dangers. Other materials indicate that the Russians were able to develop the hydrogen bomb by analyzing the fallout of American tests. In other words, physicist-propagandist Edward Teller's ruthless efforts to test at all costs seriously damaged American national security.

Your editorial had no problems with my application of Shakespeare's words to Eastern Europe: "Foul deed will rise, though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes." Yet my attempt to transpose Vaclav Havel's words from their obvious context, the condemnation of the ruthless Communist dictatorship of Czechoslovakia and more generally of Soviet Russia, to a critique of an American society where an arrogant national security military machine far exceeded its limits, could not pass your ideological muster. My analogy should not be taken to mean that I have not detested totalitarianism or that I think the two systems are equivalent. I simply wanted to turn the issue away from the self-satisfied gloating of the kind expressed in your editorial to an honest appraisal of the perversion of democratic ideals in America by those of unlimited secret government.

In the same New Year's Day speech Havel went on to say that "we," the Czech people, are not simply victims, but have also participated in the little lies which allowed the "monstrous, smelly machine" of Communism and its "spoiled moral environment" to keep on rolling. In other words, it is not sufficient to point the finger at the other; one must also include

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the possibility of self-criticism. Clearly the Communist machine was a slave state in contrast to America. Yet the evil Communist machine did not exhaust the evil of machine-like ways of thinking. Must one believe that because Communism was evil we have been totally good?

Havel's words also carry a universal significance beyond their immediate context, and we ought to use this post-Cold War time—especially as we are entering into a hot war with a brutal Stalin-style Middle Eastern dictator—to reconsider the proper limited context of what Dwight Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex" in a democratic republic. We cannot any longer allow the irresponsible little Dr. Strangeloves and their minions to dictate public life, immunized from public criticism.

Eugene Rochberg-Halton
Notre Dame, IN

Christianity and Wealth

The argument in Richard John Neuhaus' article on Christianity and wealth ("Wealth and Whimsy: On Economic Creativity," August/September) is too lean to be convincing. Important New Testament verses are missing scrutiny therein. By paring away these troubling texts, Neuhaus is able to summarize too easily Jesus' teaching on money as "whether one is attached to the present passing order or to the new order that is to come." He is also able to render as "eschatological lightheartedness, even playfulness," St. Paul's "distinctive turn" on wealth which is marked with "almost an 'easy come easy go' attitude."

By so debunking the customary "frightful seriousness" over wealth in Christianity, Neuhaus has warrant to admonish preachers that they should "be in the business of urging people to play fairly, but should not presume to claim any privileged knowledge about rules of economic fairness that are not derived from general virtues for living decently." Foregoing that, we should instead embrace, unlike Karl Barth, the "wonder" of the "freedom of economic activity" with its inherent "creativity," as we would with "aesthetic creativity." When we do, it will become apparent that "opening a new pizza parlor, designing a new widget, or manufacturing a better automobile are all somebody's Violin Concerto in D Major."

But could this breathtaking argument stand up when exposed to those troubling New Testament texts that are conspicuously absent? How about those alarming verses in Acts 5 about the death of Ananias and Sapphira for misusing their wealth? Here hoarded wealth ends in death not whimsy. Or how about those thundering verses in Matthew 6 about "not laying up for yourselves" wealth? What does that prohibition do to the wonder and creativity of economic activity? If all such activity inexorably snags our "hearts," making them "despise" heavenly things, then such economic activity has little commendable wonder left. Or how about those terrifying verses in Matthew 13 about the "pearl of great price" that requires the displacement of all wealth? There is not even a partial approval of wealth there.

Most curious of all, however, is the exclusion of those horrifying verses in Luke 16 about Lazarus and the rich man after they die. There Abraham tells the rich man that he is in the "place of torment" because in his "lifetime he received good things" because of his wealth. Apparently, good things are not to be had *both* here and there! Now where is the playfulness in that? Frantically the rich man tries to return to the living to warn them, but to no avail. Isn't there terror in that?

To his credit, Neuhaus recognizes this difficulty. He does say that his thesis is "only thinkable on the far side of the Cross," where the "intimidating anxieties about ultimate rights and wrongs" are, "by the grace of God, behind" us. But has not Neuhaus put them too far behind us? Listen to Luther: "God does not grant wealth in order to cause you to conclude from it that He is gracious; He has bestowed another greater benefit, and from it you may properly reach this conclusion. He wants to put you to the test, to see whether you are willing to abide in His fear, for very few do this; they become haughty because of their good fortune" (*Luther's Works* 3.248). Should not whimsy and playfulness be traded for fear and testing?

More fear of wealth is needed in Neuhaus' analysis. This is because whatever side of the Cross we are on, it remains a "fearful thing to be in the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Maybe Neuhaus knows how the "proleptic presence" of the "new order" in Christ Jesus can now render wealth whimsical, but until I hold in my hands a revised copy of this provocative article, which scrutinizes the troubling texts I have mentioned, I will not believe.

The Rev. Ronald F. Marshall
Seattle, WA

LOYOLA COLLEGE IN MARYLAND, Department of English, announces the availability of the *Jerome S. Cardin Chair in the Humanities.* This Visiting Professorship is available to an accomplished scholar for the 1991-92 academic year. It may be a one-or-two-semester appointment.

The *Cardin Chair* is designed to foster an understanding and appreciation of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the subjects of the humanities. Responsibilities include teaching undergraduates in the Department of English and lecturing to scholars, students, and the general public. Salary is competitive and will be handled on an individual basis.

Candidates should submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to: Carol N. Abromaitis, Chairman, Department of English, Loyola College in Maryland, 4501 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21210. The deadline for application is **December 5, 1990**.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS
NOVEMBER 1990

Learning from the Cold War

It has become commonplace in the last year or so to refer to "the end of the Cold War" and the "collapse of Communism." Sometimes it is even noted—by people concerned more with accuracy than etiquette—that America and the West *won* the Cold War. But the end of the Cold War, our *victory* in the Cold War, did not occur merely by chance, or by virtue of the general rightness of our cause, or by the inherent weaknesses of Communism. What has been largely ignored in our public discourse of recent months is the extraordinary achievement of statesmanship and national will that made this success possible: i.e., four decades of resistance to the expansion of an implacable tyranny—all the while preserving democratic institutions within our own country and alliance, and avoiding the catastrophe of nuclear war.

The theory underlying our practice was called "containment," and it was outlined in its initial form by George F. Kennan in his famous "Mr. X" article in *Foreign Affairs* ("The Sources of Soviet Conduct," July 1947) and then incorporated into the Truman Doctrine and the American policies and actions that followed. The basic idea was to frustrate the Soviet Union in its drive to expand, to deprive it of material resources and psychological momentum so that in time the economic contradictions and ideological falsity of Communism would become manifest, causing the Soviet empire to collapse of its own weight, or at least to tire of aggression. For more than forty years we pursued this containment doctrine (more or less), employing both defensive actions and careful applications of pressure at Soviet weak points, until at length the aggressor state did collapse—just as predicted.

What precedent should we cite to take the full measure of this achievement in defense of civilization? The Greeks' improbable victory over Persia in the fifth century B.C.? The repulsion of the Arab armies in the Middle Ages and the Turks at Vienna in 1683? The Allies near-defeat and subsequent reversal against Hitler in World War II?

Self-congratulation is unbecoming and unwarranted: the U.S. decision to fight the Cold War resulted not from pure altruism but rather from a happy confluence of America's self-interest with the larger good. And celebration is clearly premature: new problems and responsibilities already press upon us in the post-Cold War era (including, it should be noted, significant points of contention between America and the Soviet Union). Nevertheless, it does seem fitting to acknowledge publicly the great achievement of the age just past. The happy outcome of the Cold War was by no means inevitable. Things might have turned out very differently.

It is not unpatriotic, but merely truthful, to say that our national character and temperament, as formed by the peculiar experience of our history, made us particularly ill-suited to the task at hand: "a long twilight struggle," as John F. Kennedy put it, "year in and year out," with no end in sight and no guarantee of ultimate victory. As a fiercely democratic country, with a foreign policy susceptible to erratic swings in public mood and opinion, we had to overcome many natural inclinations and resist many temptations. We had to reject the parochial and self-absorbed isolation of years past, to bear the burden of high taxes and military conscription, and to accept an unaccustomed measure of insecurity and uncertainty. As a nation that had surmounted so many internal obstacles with relative ease, and had won its wars through technical and productive prowess, we had to learn that quick solutions are the exception rather than the rule, that military power and alliances must be joined with patient and skilled diplomacy. Our role as the hegemonic state within an alliance of free nations required us to exercise power in ways that sometimes seemed incompatible with American notions of democracy and fairness. Yet its responsible exercise was necessary, even though it produced discontents at home and abroad. Foreign resentment issued in part from sheer envy, and in part from justifiable anger at our occasional follies and abuses.

Reasonable observers in the early years of the Cold War had legitimate cause to think that America would be unable to stay a consistent course, or walk the razor's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge implied by the containment doctrine; but somehow, in spite of ourselves, we did it. American policy was not always effective, of course, as evidenced by the debacle of Vietnam, the near-catastrophe over the Cuban missiles, and the conflict with our allies in the Suez crisis. To be sure, there were many lapses, excesses, and errors. In the necessary search for security, external and internal, we were at times tempted by demagogues, inquisitors, and jingoists. There were abuses by the FBI and CIA, and there was the criminal exposure of human subjects to nuclear radiation, the full story of which we are only now beginning to learn. At the same time, America exhibited periodic derelictions of duty in maintaining national strength, caused by either frivolous indifference and complacency or by morbid, paralyzing guilt.

Yet, despite these and other ignoble episodes, the remarkable thing—given the gravity of the situation and the complexity and subtlety of the nation's task—was the degree of wisdom and dedication that Americans were able to marshal and apply in a relatively consistent way: from the reconstruction of Europe and Japan, to the formation of NATO, to the Korean intervention, to the slow-but-steady strengthening of our alliance. The arms buildup and ideological counteroffensive of the Reagan years appeared to some as a new and dangerous bellicosity; but American assertiveness in the 1980s was really no more than a revival of our commitment to containment and deterrence, which had fallen into a bad state by the mid-1970s. Though a more conclusive historical verdict will require further study, it does seem that America's second wind in the 1980s was what finally broke the Soviets' bank and their will to aggression.

Great historical achievements often fail to receive full recognition in their own time. For many years after the Civil War, for example, Americans tried to put their great national ordeal behind them, and they took little account of the political and military achievement that saved the Union and freed the slaves. Later on, sometime in the 1880s or 1890s, popular interest developed in the story of the war and in its larger significance as a world-historical event. Perhaps a similar process is operating in the wake of the Cold War, so that a full appreciation of its meaning will be postponed until after our exhaustion is past and our perspective clarified by time.

Insofar as a provisional assessment is possible, some of the best contemporary journalists have, we believe, correctly interpreted the signs of the times. For the most part, however, the organs of mass media and establishment opinion have made only vague and passing reference to the victory and vindication of containment.

More unfortunate and ominous than oversight are the frequent Cold War post-mortems that not only ignore the historical achievement of American policy but actually seek to deny that achievement, even to interpret our policies and conduct as cause for lament and reproach. In influential journals of opinion and on newspaper op-ed pages we find persistent attempts to misrepresent the meaning of events and to exaggerate the costs of the Cold War. The Cold War, it is alleged, ruined the American economy, militarized our culture, led to a bloated National Security State, and tarnished our image abroad. Now that the Soviet Union is seen to have been far poorer than we earlier imagined, we are told that it never really threatened us after all, particularly in recent years; hence, it is smugly asserted, America's military posture was unnecessary, wasteful, arrogant, and dangerously irresponsible.

These claims are insupportable. The current economic malaise in the U.S. has many causes, some of them far more serious than the onerous costs of national defense. In any case, there was no real choice in the matter. Avoiding these costs would have meant either subjugation or surrender on the installment plan. As for our international image, the Cold War critics—the "anti-Cold War brigade" as Arch Puddington has called them—seem strangely out of touch with reality. The formerly captive peoples of Eastern Europe express profound gratitude toward America, and appreciation for its having preserved a light of freedom while they languished in totalitarian darkness. Their heroes are people like Ronald Reagan and Jeane Kirkpatrick, not the liberal press and intelligentsia, which, out of moral and intellectual delinquency, or loss of nerve, often denied or minimized Communism's oppressive character in Eastern Europe and its threat to freedom everywhere.

This situation must be deeply embarrassing and grating for "the anti-Cold War brigade," many of whose members consider themselves witnesses for the poor and oppressed of the world, and the prophetic voice of public conscience. Having sought accommodation rather than resistance to tyrants, they must feel vulnerable to the sort of chiding that Henry IV of France reportedly gave to an absent general when he said: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon; we fought at Arques and you were not there."

The true victors and heroes of the age just past will, we trust, ultimately win historical vindication, even if media and intellectual elites are able to deprive them of it for a time. But the post-Cold War debate is not solely about vindication or historical accuracy for its own sake. The contest to define the meaning of the past (and its alleged lessons) is also a struggle to define and control the debate about present and future policy. If a strong American military was unnecessary, wasteful, and dangerous in the Cold War period—as critics maintain—then *a fortiori* it is a menace to prosperity and justice in the post-Cold War era. Thus, discrediting Cold War hardliners is invariably the basis for calls to dismantle America's defense system. It is time, by this reckoning, to enjoy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a whopping "peace dividend" by making deep cuts in military spending. The people who were consistently wrong are acting as though they had been right all along, and they are trying to steer policy on the assumption that American power is untrustworthy or unnecessary or both.

The whole lesson of the Cold War period, however, is that, all things considered, American power *is* trustworthy and safe—that, more often than not, it has been and continues to be a source of both order and justice in an international arena ever tending to chaos and injustice. The world remains a dangerous place even as the Cold War comes to a close. A new de-Communized Russian state will still possess a fearsome arsenal that could menace American and Western interests; and no one can say what direction a new regime there might take. Even if it is friendly to our interests and ideals, the collapse of Soviet power has left much instability and uncertainty in its wake. The Middle East crisis precipitated by the tyrant of Iraq is proof enough that we are not at "the end of history." Difficult as it is for some people to accept, we live in a permanently unpeaceful and unsafe world.

On both the individual and the collective level, the temptation to aggression remains a permanent condition of life in history, as ineradicable as the desire for justice and peace. If our Judeo-Christian religious tradition teaches us anything about the life of nations and empires, it is the persistence of sin until "the end of days," when God (it is hoped and believed) will transfigure human existence. The psalmist was describing the truth of every age, and not just his own, when he said, "Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The current Middle East crisis is merely the first of our post-Cold War reminders that there will, alas, always be "wars and rumors of war."

In point of fact, there are reasons to be hopeful that the immediate future might be, if not the end of history, at least a protracted period of relative peace and prosperity. Perhaps this generation is being called not to grand, heroic martial action but to the unglamorous, though vital, task of securing and building a peace won by the Cold War generation. In either case, it seems to us irresponsible for America to demobilize half its forces and scuttle plans for advanced military aircraft and defense against nuclear attack—as many in Congress and the public arena are now proposing. Current debates regarding defense cutbacks need to take more seriously the possibility that we are lowering our guard too soon, and creating a dangerous atmosphere in which our military strength will be allowed to atrophy. Even as we strive for the best possible, most equitable peace that fallible human beings can erect, we must remember that, short of a transfiguring act of God, there is no true security or permanent peace in this world. If we are to derive a general lesson from the specific experience of the Cold War, it might be that history itself is "a long twilight struggle."

The Uses of Homophobia

The best way to win an argument is to control the terms of discussion. Any high school debater knows that, and those of us who forget it do so at the risk of finding ourselves in awkwardly defensive modes of public discourse.

Take the current and curious case of the term "homophobia," a word ever more widely applied to those who in any way or for whatever reason find homosexual behavior objectionable or at all problematic. Now a phobia is not, in normal parlance, a good thing to have. The dictionary describes it as "an exaggerated, usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object or group of objects." People with phobias, we think, have problems. They need help, treatment; they are, well, sick.

The problem with the term "homophobia" is that we have in it an epithet in search of a condition. Beyond its ideological uses, it has no existence. It will be found nowhere in the clinical lexicon. If it were to be psychologically usable, it would refer to those depraved yet pitiable creatures so uncertain of or insecure about their own sexual identities that they find it necessary to indulge in gay-bashing, in assault—verbal, physical, or both—on those with same-sex preferences. That exaggerated condition aside, objection to homosexuality has been until recently an all but universal social norm. If most people understood obsessive opposition to homosexuality as abnormal, so also did they understand homosexuality itself.

A substantial change has occurred in recent years. With the rise of a militant gay rights movement has come a redefinition of terms, a recasting of common understandings. It is now customary among gays and lesbians, and increasingly in the elite culture, to regard *any* form of objection to homosexual behavior as homophobia. Norms have been reshuffled, even turned on their heads. It is now not homosexual behavior that needs to be defended or explained, but rather objection to such behavior. Opposition to homosexuality has become a suspect moral category: thus the increasingly common grouping of "homophobia" with racism or sexism.

Just how far the process of redefinition has progressed is revealed in that bellwether of moral fashion, the *New York Times*. The *Times* recently featured in its Science section a piece by reporter Daniel Goleman entitled "Homophobia: Scientists Find Clues To Its Roots." Ostensibly an attempt to explain the particular problem of the increased incidence of physical assaults against gays, the article in fact lumps *all* forms of opposition to homosexuality—everything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from anti-gay "feelings" to moral arguments against homosexual practice to actual gay-bashing—in the undifferentiated category of "homophobia." The logic of the argument is clear, though nowhere explicitly stated: gays will only become safe from assault when the straight world concedes the unqualified legitimacy—on all grounds—of their behavior. Homophobia, in this view, is all of a piece, and to enter into it at any point for any reason is to be complicit in the beating up—and worse—of gays and lesbians.

The structure of Mr. Goleman's argument reveals its presuppositions. Americans are wrong to assume, Mr. Goleman begins, that the rise in violence against homosexuals can be traced to the AIDS epidemic. Instead, "researchers have found" that the disease simply "has given bigots an excuse to act out their hatred." For such people, "anti-gay bias" lies deep, deeper even than "defensiveness about their own sexuality." "The greatest portion of anti-homosexual bias," it turns out, "arises from a combination of fear and self-righteousness in which homosexuals are perceived as contemptible threats to the moral universe." Such attitudes of moral disapproval ("affirmation of one's own values through anti-gay sentiment") are most deeply entrenched and most difficult to change when they are "based on religion." Given these deep structures of bigotry, little wonder that anti-gay sentiment "is far more accepted among large numbers of Americans than is bias against other groups," or that many teenagers, "while reluctant to advocate open bias against racial and religious groups, [are] emphatic about disliking homosexual men and women."

All the "studies" from all the "researchers" (many of them self-described homosexuals) cited by Mr. Goleman apparently find it unnecessary to engage the *arguments* of critics of homosexuality, to ponder whether anything might reside there other than "prejudice" or "bigotry." The assumption throughout is one of pathology. Mr. Goleman's "scientists" give no indication of being able to distinguish between the attitudes, on the one hand, of philosophers, psychologists, and theologians who regard homosexual practice as an objective disorder, and on the other, of gangs of skinheads eagerly in search of gays to bash. It's all homophobia, and it follows that decent people will have nothing to do with any of it. Thus is debate on the moral status of homosexuality effectively foreclosed.

America's religious communities have a particular stake in seeing that the conversation-stoppers not be allowed to set the terms of public discourse on this matter. Both Judaism and Christianity insist that there is a divinely ordained right order of things, and that our sexual drives find appropriate expression within that order in monogamous heterosexual unions. Only in the quite recent past has that millennia-old understanding come into question. It takes no extraordinary perception to see that God made men and women for each other; indeed, it requires remarkable perversity of mind to get around that obvious intent. Homosexuals have the right to expect of the rest of us decent and respectful treatment as human beings and citizens; they have no right to insist that we surrender our fundamental moral and religious beliefs in order that they might feel comfortable with their sexual behavior. When the militants among them choose to conduct argument by insult—such as labelling all opposition to their agenda as homophobia—they consign themselves to the same moral category as the gay-baiters of the heterosexual world.

The vexed moral question of homosexual behavior requires humane and toughminded conversation. In that conversation, exercises in reductionist question-begging like that of the *Times* have no useful place. A satisfactory response to the perduring phenomenon of homosexuality will be found, if at all, not in spurious invocations of "science" but in unsentimental engagement of our deepest moral intuitions and traditions.

Opinion

Nature's Call

Jean Bethke Elshtain

In Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana* the dissolute but not, he emphatically insists, officially "defrocked" Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon has been "collecting evidence . . . of man's inhumanity to God." When asked what he means by that, Shannon indicates that he refers to the "pain we cause Him. We've poisoned His atmosphere. We've slaughtered His creatures of the wild. We've polluted His rivers. We've even taken God's noblest creature man and brainwashed him into becoming our own product, not God's." It is a powerful and poignant moment in a very sad tale of our humanity and inhumanity.

I thought about the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon quite a lot during all the to-do surrounding Earth Day last spring. To be sure, many of the pronouncements and festive events were more than a little precious and a tad smug, separating the environmentally aware from all those benighted souls who keep the water running as they brush their teeth. But I knew I was more with the event and the concerns it surfaced and displayed in such a variety of ways than I was agin' it.

And so, it seems, are the vast majority of my fellow citizens. The survey data shows a startling rise in the number of Americans who say they agree with the statement that "protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high and continuing environmental improvements must be made *regardless of cost.*" In September 1981,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

45 percent concurred with that sentiment; by Earth Day (this April), fully 74 percent identified with efforts to save what can be saved and to reverse many current trends. A strong 64 percent said they would be "willing to change their lifestyles to better the environment." This is about as close to consensus as politics ever gets.

Politicians are getting the message. Translating it into viable public policy is another matter, of course, but the point I want to make is that a responsible "green politics" and Christian commitments can, and do, go hand in hand. The Hebrew and Christian traditions hold that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; that God beheld the world and declared it good. Unlike gnostic disparagement of created matter, Christians rejoice in creation, in the great chain of being. In contrast to Pelagianism's *hubris* concerning man's ability to control and shape his affairs, Christians are appropriately humble and prepared to acknowledge the limits to man's power over himself and all others, including non-human living things.

One need not in holding this view fall into cloying nature-worship or a hopelessly romanticized vision of the natural world as benign and beautiful until man messed it up. Rather, one fights the nature conquerors because of their arrogance, their ongoing sin of pride. Wondrous creatures not made by man are being made to disappear because of man's reckless disregard of his vocation as steward of the earth. For example, amphibians all over the world are disappearing. One should be both saddened and alarmed over this—remorseful because of the destruction of irreplaceable, unique beings; concerned because this is a sign of the times that bodes ill for other beings and habitats. One sees another malign sign of the times in the ongoing genetic manipulation and recombination that is moving with great rapidity from the field of animal husbandry to the human domain. "Texas Researchers Develop 4 Gene-Altered Calves," reports the *New York Times*, going on to detail how genes are being spliced by chemical and drug companies hoping to perform all sorts of wonders in the name of science but with profit on their minds and precious little concern over the implications of their actions.

Man may be a wondrous beast, but he was not meant to play God. Surely that is a lesson we ought to have learned. But it seems not. It seems we must continuously be taught it the hard way. More than ever, we need preachers of responsibility, appropriateness of scale, decency of ambition and aim. The Christian tradition is filled with prophets and saints who rejoiced at creation—Thomas à Kempis, Meister Eckhart, or Ignatius of Loyola, who spoke of wonder and "surging emotion" as he beheld God's creation. St. Augustine's reactions were similar. He marveled at the many blues of the sea against the sky and at the apparently gratuitous beauty of the flower's bloom. St. Francis' kinship with all creatures undoubtedly made him look pretty silly sometimes, but he appears, well, saintly, compared to the *hubris*-ridden scientists cooking up the genome project for genetic mapping and alteration of the human species.

Pope John Paul II spoke on the ecological crisis as his theme for World Peace Day this year. He called for a new environmental solidarity to deal with ecological issues that transcend national jurisdictions and he insisted that a "right to a safe environment" be included in the Charter of Human Rights. He expressed foreboding at biological research and "indiscriminate genetic manipulation." The ecological crisis, he declared, is at its base a moral crisis. Because it is a moral crisis, Christians have the right and the responsibility to speak out and to act—presumably from the principle of stewardship which rejects and resists any redescription of man's powers relative to God's such that the earth is seen as man's to do with as he will.

A second great voice for green philosophy and prophecy is that of Czechoslovakia's philosopher-playwright President, Vaclav Havel. Havel has scored the destruction of the environment as one of the most unforgivable depredations of state socialist rule. For Havel, we are in the midst of nothing less than a "crisis of human integrity," for we have lost the horizon against which meaningful human action can take place. Instead, we find "the desolation of things torn from their context, the arrogance of conquerors who expect that the captives and the vanquished will clean up after them, the despair of those who do not relate to eternity, but only to the present day." The loss of a concrete, transcendent horizon is exacting a terrible price: destroyed forests, rivers, creatures; man deprived of "his human integrity" because he has lost responsibility for himself and towards others within his world.

In a world in which production and consumption reign supreme, rather than being kept in their appropriate place, we lose, quite literally, a homeland. In one of his *Letters to Olga*, Havel writes:

> Not long ago, while watching a report on cows on the television news, I realized that the cow is no longer an animal: it is a machine that has an "input" (grain feeds) and an "output" (milk). It has its own production plans and its own operator whose job is the same as the job of the entire economy today: to increase output while decreasing input. The cow serves us quite efficiently, really, but at the cost of no longer being a cow, in the same way that Northern Bohemia is an important source of fuel . . . at the cost of ceasing to be a part of our homeland and becoming something between the surface of the moon and a garbage dump. . . . Man has grasped the world in a way that has caused him, *de facto*, to lose it; he has subdued it by destroying it. . . . By robbing the cow of the last remnants of her autonomy as a cow, man has, at the same time, robbed himself of his human identity and thus become like a piece of livestock himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How much longer, with the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, must we "collect evidence" of man's inhumanity to God? If Havel is right that we are in a crisis of responsibility and identity, then Christians can and should turn to the rich creation symbolism within their own tradition, suffused as it is with imagery of water, air, sky, and earth. One doesn't have to rub crystals and bay at the moon to advocate green politics as part of an anti-gnostic, anti-Pelagian ethic of responsibility.

Jean Bethke Elshtain *is the Centennial Professor of Political Science and Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. Her most recent book is* Women and War. *A collection of her essays entitled* Power Trips and Other Journeys *will be published next month by the University of Wisconsin Press.*

Notes on the Culture Struggle: Dr. King in the Law Schools

Mary Ann Glendon

The suggestion has been made on occasion in these pages that Americans are engaged in a *Kulturkampf*, a contest over the role of common American moral intuitions in contributing to fundamental understandings of what kind of society we wish to be. There are few signs of any such struggle, however, in the nation's leading law schools, whose faculty and graduates have historically played key roles in shaping these understandings. The reigning assumption that religious and moral values (except personal liberty and equality) are mere arbitrary private preferences is seldom challenged. Indeed, Columbia Law Professor Kent Greenawalt, in a recent *Michigan Law Review* article on the role of religious convictions in law-making, found it necessary to begin by asking his legal readers' forbearance for broaching such a topic. He captured the prevailing ethos well:

> Many of you will hold no religious beliefs or will think that your beliefs are irrelevant to what the law should be. . . . Many law professors, like other intellectuals, display a hostility or skeptical indifference to religion that amounts to a thinly disguised contempt for belief in any reality beyond that discoverable by scientific inquiry and ordinary human experience. Those who regard religious convictions as foolish superstitions, whose impact on our social life should be minimized, may find discussions about the place of religious convictions a most unappetizing theme.

According to Michigan law professor Carl Schneider, there is a connection between prevailing attitudes among members of the legal academy and a certain disdain for democracy.

> A startling number . . . believe that their education (especially their legal education), their intellectual ability, and their freedom from prejudice and from the superstition of religion give them a superior moral claim to political power. Such beliefs contribute to and are reinforced by their passionate commitment to a conception of judicial review which emphasizes the failings of democratic processes and majorities and the superior enlightenment of judges.

The most commonly *stated* reasons for drawing a *cordon sanitaire* around legal political discourse, however, are not that moral and religious beliefs are essentially arbitrary or foolish, or that ordinary men and women are unfit to rule. They are, rather, that religion has often been a source of civil strife, and that particularistic groups are often intolerant and "illiberal." All too frequently, what is implied is that religion and particular communities are *presumptively* intolerant and socially divisive.

These standard positions emerged with rare purity in a recent Harvard Law School Legal History Workshop when Professor Anthony Cook of the University of Florida Law School presented a paper titled, "Beyond Critical Legal Studies: The Reconstructive Theology of Dr. Martin Luther King." The speaker, a Baptist minister as well as a legal scholar, took leftist critical theorists to task for attacking liberal democracy without proposing a way to reconstruct it. He chided them, too, for largely ignoring the history and perspectives of women, blacks, Native Americans, and others who have been the principal victims of the social injustices that critical theorists condemn. As examples of a kind of engagement with liberalism that is not only more attentive to concrete human experience but also more effective, Professor Cook pointed to the religiously grounded political theory of Dr. King, and to the role of African-American religion in the civil rights movement.

As soon as his presentation ended, Professor Cook was bombarded with questions: Wasn't there a deep suspicion of religion at the heart of the Founding, for the very good reason that religion was known to promote faction and discord? What place is there in a "reconstructive theology" for women? For non-Christians? For non-believers? After several minutes of challenge to the Cook thesis along these lines, a young black man raised his hand and identified himself as a first-year law student. Addressing Professor Cook, the young man said that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he did not know quite what to make of the remarks and questions he had been hearing. He would like to know, he said, where the speakers got their ideas about religion, since their assumptions didn't correspond to anything he had encountered in *his* church. In fact, he went on, he was quite bewildered by the allegations that churches were citadels of hierarchy, oppression, and intolerance of dissent from prevailing orthodoxy, since he rather associated those qualities with the Harvard Law School. Another participant then allowed, in a conciliatory fashion, that not all religions displayed those characteristics—just "rigid homogeneous [!] ones like the Roman Catholic Church."

Professor Cook's workshop presentation at Harvard was something of a novelty: he attacked a leftist movement from the left, and he defended the legitimacy of religiously grounded viewpoints inside a citadel of secular thought. His thesis was radically at odds with the more conventional (in academic circles) position on Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement that had been set forth a few months earlier in another *Michigan Law Review* article. There, a Maryland law professor, David Luban, confessing that he is "deeply dismayed and fearful of the incursions by organized religion into our national politics," undertook to review and analyze the political thought of Martin Luther King. In the famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Luban found two "strands." The "religious strands of King's narrative," Luban wrote, "make historical sense of only a fragment of the actual black movement, and to that extent they fail as a political narrative." The professor had good news for admirers of Dr. King, though. He concluded that once King's thought is cleansed of its "Christian particularism," its "*non*-biblical strand . . . promotes a remarkably attractive—let me go so far as to say 'true'—political and legal theory."

Academics and others who express dismay at the prospect of a greater role for religious voices in political life seem to believe that because some religious adherents have committed atrocities in the name of their beliefs, there must be something wrong with religion itself. The dismal record suggests, however (to paraphrase Chesterton), not that religion has been tried and found wanting, but that it has been tried and found hard. If the fears of proponents of strict "neutrality" are terror, intolerance, and oppression, the historical evidence reveals that the excesses of the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the Iranian revolution pale before those of the thoroughly secular regimes of Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot. On the whole, the world's religions and their followers (however fallen, misguided, or inept) have probably done more to moderate the worst human impulses than to call them forth. Professor Luban's striking naiveté in this respect is evidenced by his personal profession of faith that politics itself is best understood as theological, and that political action, rather than religion, is "essentially redemptive." This kind of sentiment, of course, has been fully exploited by secular cults of the state from the French Terror to National Socialism.

Unfortunately, the principal alternatives in the legal academy to the dangerous idea of political action as "redemptive" seem to be either the contempt for politics associated with a court-centered view of democracy, or the reductionist view that politics is a mere struggle for power. The idea that politics also could be a process of public deliberation about the right ordering of our lives together in society remains, for most legal academicians, at best a vague memory from college days. Except for rare occasions, like Dr. Cook's surprising visitation, the culture struggle over national moral self-understanding is for them a mere rumble in the distance.

MARY ANN GLENDON *is a professor in the School of Law at Harvard University.*

An Open Letter on Abortion

Marc F. Griesbach

I intend these remarks primarily for a specific group of people: those persons of good will who say they are personally opposed to abortion but are prochoice. Though we hold opposed views, my hope is that we can still engage profitably in a rational discussion of the abortion issue, once we come to a better understanding of what we mean by freedom of choice.

I am prepared to acknowledge at the outset that freedom of choice is a fundamental prerequisite for any fully human life. All morality presupposes that normal mature human beings, under normal circumstances, are free to choose what they will and will not do. To say that we are "free to choose" is simply to state a fact about human nature; it is to speak of a distinctively human power, the will, a "piece of standard human equipment," part of the way we are. (I have chosen freely to write this letter, and you have freely chosen to read it. Both of us could have "freely chosen" to do something else instead, or to do nothing at all.) Having "freedom of choice" does not mean, however, that we are *justified* in choosing to do whatever we please—to rob or rape or defraud or to set our neighbor's house afire. That would be to claim a moral "blank check." Freedom of choice is not, then, a kind of "unlimited right," which some claim and others would deny to them.

There are, of course, those who deny that freedom of choice is a fact about human nature, that human beings have this capability; but they do so at the cost of undermining all human moral responsibility. You and I equally regard this position as mistaken, I assume, or we could not meaningfully argue the question of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether a woman ought or ought not to choose to have an abortion, or any other "ought" question, for that matter.

Where does that leave us? If freedom of choice is a fact of human nature, part of what it means to be a human being, then, I suggest, it makes no more sense to be "prochoice" (or "antichoice," for that matter) than it would to be in favor of, or against, birds being able to fly or fish being able to swim. As human beings, we *are able* to choose, and that's that. Facts, whether about people or birds or fish, are not something about which we can meaningfully line up for or against. We do, of course, frequently argue, but on quite other grounds, about whether choosing to perform a specific act is or is not *morally justifiable.* And that is precisely what the moral argument concerning abortion is all about.

It seems to follow, then, that the mere fact of a woman's choosing to have an abortion, of exercising her power of free choice, does not make her choice right—any more than if she freely chose to shoplift, or rob a bank, or kidnap another woman's child. For to acknowledge that men and women have freedom of choice doesn't settle, but only raises, the question of whether or not the specific acts we choose to perform are morally justifiable.

If we are in agreement thus far, we are now in a position to sort out some of the different aspects of this complicated social issue of abortion, and to focus our attention upon them in due order. We must be quite explicit, to begin with, in recognizing the distinction between questions of morality and those of law. It is one thing to say that something is immoral, quite another to say that there is, or even ought to be, a law against it. Persons who agree on the former may quite possibly disagree on the latter. Whatever the relationship to be found between law and morality, the first requirement is that we recognize that they are two distinct orders.

If I am right in assuming that you take moral questions as seriously as I do, it is quite possible that we are much closer to seeing eye to eye on the *morality* of abortion than we realize. Much depends upon just what you mean when you say that you are "personally opposed" to abortion. You may mean only that you find it a distasteful, unpleasant business, that the very thought of it makes you feel uncomfortable, that you just don't *like* it. Quite possibly, however, you mean much more than that. You may even agree with me that every abortion is a clear case of ending a defenseless human life, a horrible thing to do (if you stop to think about it), an act that is clearly *immoral.* You may, of course, so regard abortion, *morally speaking,* and still be convinced that we "have no right to impose" our view upon others, because that would violate their *freedom of conscience.*

I readily acknowledge that we have no right, in so many words, to "impose" our moral convictions upon others, to compel them to think as we do—granting for the moment that this is even possible. It seems to me, however, that only someone prepared to rule out all moral teaching could logically find fault with a person's efforts respectfully to call another's attention to what he or she sees as a serious immorality. Unless I am mistaken, to do what one can to help another recognize a serious evil that might not otherwise be understood to be such is to do that person a great service. This effort to assist others to "see" something of importance that they may have been missing is at least part of what the educational process is all about. When conducted in that spirit, it can in no way be construed as "imposing one's views" upon or violating our fellow citizens' freedom of conscience.

To persons convinced that abortion is immoral, it will also be evident then, I should think, that it is right and proper to do one's best to make that view prevail in our society. No less than the slavery that marred our past history, and the racial and economic injustice, street crime, drug trade, and abuse of the defenseless young and old that plague us today, the spread of the abortion culture must concern all who care about the well-being of our society. To say that one is "personally opposed" to abortion while being indifferent in the face of the militant advocacy with which it is being fostered by many of our intellectual leaders and social institutions, or even to support their efforts, in my judgment, makes no sense.

So far we have said nothing, however, about the desirability of enacting legislation that would forbid altogether, or impose limits upon, procedures intended to terminate fetal life. More likely than not, this is where our disagreement will become most evident. It may well be that what you really mean when you say that you are "prochoice" is that you oppose the enactment of statutes that would preclude, for those so inclined, a *legally permitted* choice to have an abortion. My earlier assurance that we, by our very nature, have freedom of choice in the sense of the capability of acting as we choose would matter little, you may say, if the law were to forbid what I want to do.

Legislative proposals to restrict abortion could, of course, be of many different sorts, from laws that would merely prohibit governmental funding or impose certain requirements, to prohibition with or without specific exceptions. Being "prochoice" may mean that you would reject any and all legislation, or only the most severely restrictive.

It seems almost grotesque to hear persons who claim that they are against "trampling on the rights of others" strenuously opposing even laws that would allow persons the freedom not to have any of their tax money subsidize expenditures that seriously violate their conscience, or laws that restore to parents of pregnant adolescent girls the opportunity to exercise their responsibilities to provide them guidance in their immature years. But I would think that a nation such as ours, which proclaims itself to be in the vanguard of the modern world's struggle to advance human rights, should be prepared to go well beyond those legislative

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

measures, which call for a bare minimum of courage and reasonableness. Nor will the demise of *Roe v. Wade*, however much to be hoped for, be enough to restore to our culture a decent respect for unborn human life.

Sad to say, our national character has been so eroded that it increasingly shows itself insufficient, without the support of strong legislation, to overcome the carefully contrived opposition to this fundamental human right. Whether by way of a constitutional amendment or legislative statute, the contribution of law, it seems to me, must once again in our history be an integral part of this drive for justice for the defenseless.

Whatever might be your position concerning this latter admittedly personal opinion of my own—and you may well feel the need to give much more thought to these matters—there is room, I admit, for honest disagreement when the question is: What legislation, if any, would best serve the common good under present circumstances? It has quite legitimately been pointed out that sometimes legislation can do more harm than good, especially in situations where the citizenry is deeply divided. Flagrant disregard of a specific law, it has been argued, tends to undermine respect for the law in general. There is no denying the validity of this concern.

But such an objection to abortion legislation has a somewhat hollow ring when one recalls that much of the present confusion on this issue has resulted in large part from the U.S. Supreme Court's own act of striking down virtually all previous abortion legislation in the *Roe* decision, and from the massive propaganda campaigns that have been waged since 1973 in support of that decision. It has long been recognized that the presence or absence of a law is itself a potentially effective educational instrument. The virtual abortion-on-demand situation in America today, with which an estimated 80 percent of the people are said even now to disagree, would seem of itself to be an eloquent argument in favor of the need for appropriate legislation. Was it not precisely because of the widespread disagreement, particularly in the southern states, on what constitutes racial justice that the need for further Federal civil rights legislation became evident in the 1960s? The irony should be apparent when many of the same "liberal" voices who strongly supported civil rights laws in similar circumstances are today raised in opposition to any proposed abortion legislation.

Obviously, the issue in this country as to what, if any, legislative action is required in the area of abortion is far from settled. In the meantime, it would be reassuring if persons "personally opposed" to abortion who are presently also opposed to legislation could be counted upon, as responsible citizens, to do what they can by other means to help eradicate what they claim to regard as a serious blot on our civilization. Here I have in mind particularly those who are or would aspire to be our political leaders in these troubled times. Does it not seem disingenuous for such persons to set aside as a matter of merely personal belief what they themselves recognize as a serious social problem?

Public officials, if they are really sincere in their professed personal abhorrence of abortion, could reasonably be expected, it seems to me, to be doing all in their power, at least by means short of proposing appropriate legislation (if their "political conscience" does not permit that), to help a divided people to recognize abortion as a terrible blemish on our society. Would we have any respect for a civic leader who stood silent and inert in the face of racial bigotry or child molestation or degradation of women, all the while protesting that he also is "personally opposed" to such heinous behavior? What political considerations could conceivably justify such a stance, then, with respect to abortion in today's America?

MARC F. GRIESBACH *is Professor of Philosophy emeritus at Marquette University.*

Binx and the Malaise

Paul Greenberg

I heard the news in late May as I was walking into the Sno-White Cafe here in Pine Bluff, Ark.

Walker Percy died, Roger Coley told me. Roger is a Mississippi boy who's now design editor at the *Pine Bluff Commercial.* Newspapers have titles like Design Editor these days. He stopped in front of the dusty door to tell me. I walked right in, even managed to order a cheeseburger uptown—that's with tomato, lettuce, and mayonnaise—but I was stunned. I didn't know what to say. We talked about the weather.

A drenching-wet spring was turning into the kind of dry-as-dust summer that I used to revel in when I was younger. On the first really hot hot day in Pine Bluff, when the heat turns every metal surface into a grill, and bounces off walls like it'll never stop, I used to make a point of wandering through the warehouse district a couple of blocks away around Third and Alabama, just to feel the summer returning like a Southern childhood, coming on like the world everlasting. I'm not quite up to that any more, not after a sunstroke a few years ago, but the return of unbearable summer still fills me with unreasonable joy. I have a friend who on the first night when the heat won't stop no matter how late makes a point of driving out in the country along Bayou Bartholomew with his air conditioning going full blast but all the car windows down, so he can both survive and breathe in the absolute rankness of spring utterly undone by summer as the bugs splatter on the windshield. If Herbert W. Armstrong is on the radio with news of *The Wo-orld Tomorrow*, it's the epitome of South. I guess everybody has his own ritual, his own sign and wonder. It's like the rainbow given to Noah and his crew, an assurance that the cycle goes on and on. And then I hear Walker Percy is dead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I knew he was sick—I heard he resigned from the LSU board of trustees or some such awhile back for reasons of health. But you're never prepared, never, for something like that. You hear about it and you realize the minute hand of your own life has slipped forward and, though nothing has changed outwardly, everything's different inwardly. The scenery shrivels and the colors change; it's not the same without him to see it.

I have to tell you I was hurt nobody told me any sooner. Here in Arkansas we're always treated like poor relations. I had read about the death of modernist playwrights and ex-governors and such in the public prints, but there was nary a mention of Walker Percy that I saw. His obituary in the *New York Times* must have been in one of those that stack up before I can get to it. I felt like an old and not very suitable beau that the bride's family sends a wedding invitation on the day of the ceremony—so they'll be sure he won't show up and embarrass everybody. It's not the same, celebrating—or mourning—out of sync with everybody else. It's a kind of chronological alienation. It lends perspective, all right, which is just what the modern world has too much of now. You can't take it as hard as you want to, seeing how it's a week or two past. Yet it's news to *you*. You don't know how to behave, except in the most polite, acceptable way.

Me, I ate my cheeseburger and kept talking, talking to poor Roger about *The Moviegoer*, Walker Percy's first book, and how much it meant to me at the time. That must have been about 1962, when I was between jobs and careers and women and cities. *The Moviegoer* does more than stand up on rereading; it changes every time, or at least my reaction does. Come to think, that's just why Binx Bolling, its hero—well, protagonist—keeps going to old movies: not because they change but because he's changed enough for them to tell him something different. The same chinaberries may be crushed against the same sidewalks outside more and more remote neighborhood theaters, but the movie itself hasn't changed. It's the one standard measurement—like the golden yardstick you hear about somewhere in the federal vaults—by which everything else can be measured. I guess movies were ol' Binx's first day of real summer. He kept coming back to them to escape what he called the Malaise.

Malaise used to be a good word before Jimmy Carter ruined it, and a lot better than the literary equivalent, Anomie. Malaise was just the right word *circa* 1962, when *The Moviegoer* was first published. Now the politicians have absconded with the word. Binx was much afflicted with it. Malaise didn't make him evil or sinful. The beauty of Binx is that there was nothing unique about him, including his incapacity to do anything as meaningful, as human, as to sin. That's what terrified him, the absence of terror. Walker Percy had that just right.

Malaise: I remember how Walker Percy had Binx describe it that evening in Gentilly back in the early sixties, when the buildings were low against the sky and deserted at the end of the day, and the occasional gas station attendants hosed down the concrete under their "glowing discs and shells and stars." For once and ever the reader saw the beauty and transience and ordinariness of it, and the emptiness of our distractions.

> On the way home, I stop off at the Tivoli. It is a Jane Powell picture and I have no intention of seeing it. However, Mr. Kinsella the manager sees me and actually pulls me in by the coatsleeve for a sample look. He says it is a real pleaser and he means it. There go Jane and some fellow walking arm in arm down the street in a high wide and handsome style and doing a wake up and sing number. The doorman, the cop on the corner, the taxi driver, each sunk in his own private misery, smile and begin to tap their feet. I am hardly ever depressed by a movie and Jane Powell is a very nice-looking girl, but the despair of it is enough to leave you gone in the stomach.

God, isn't that the truth? What Binx wanted, what we want, is some relief from the Malaise, and recognizing it is the first step. Walker Percy didn't just name it, the way some textbook on Existentialism 101 would, complete with index, genealogy, and required reading, but made blank art of it, as close and as distant as New Orleens Land of Dreems. Reading *The Moviegoer* made you want to drive down to Metarie *right now* just to see what wasn't there, till you snapped to and realized you might as well stay where you were, 'cause it wasn't here, either.

In Walker Percy, the post-sixties at last got our counterpoint to Faulkner—the Dixie Express, Flannery O'Connor called him. And the roar and rumble of him was so great and thick and all-encompassing when he went by that nothing but it existed, and we just can't live immersed in all that all the time. Besides, everything was changing, as it always does, and who would record this different South, or even non-South?

Damn it, Faulkner has become part of the Malaise, too. He has become the great backdrop against which those who come after have to carry on, play our parts, recite our lines, live our scripted lives long after the whole theater has crumbled around us. José Ortega y Gasset says somewhere that culture is a series of swimming strokes amidst the continuous shipwreck that is life. (I guess not knowing life is shipwreck is Malaise.) The strokes keep us afloat, but once the seas calm they're no longer necessary. We keep practicing them anyway, and making sure the successive generations learn them ever so exactly, not realizing that they have become ornamental rather than necessary—Culture rather than culture. You can sense it happening to Faulkner even if I'll be damned rather than admit it.

A great artist is a great inner tyrant; he can't help but dictate. Some of the devotees read through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faulknerian canon every year, the way churches go through the Bible. Is it possible to do that and lead one's own life? Isn't it mesmerizing and exhausting enough just to read *Light in August* every December, in time for Christmas? To study Scripture, a wise rabbi once told me, one has to know how to do two things: to enter and to emerge. The entering is the easy part, the irresistible part. But how emerge? And what is left when one does? A sense of loss. The Malaise.

Faulkner crystallized that sense of loss forever in his world squeezed into a sentence, his inexhaustible world carved in interminable sentences, and so deprived us of our own sense of loss. But Walker Percy emerged out of Mississippi (of course) and restored it to us—a whole different sense of loss, ineffable and inexplicable but unmistakable. A *recognized* emptiness, even if there was the danger of feeling it too strongly, of sentimentalizing it. In our rapture with *The Moviegoer*, we were reduced to talking in italicized prose—like one of Walker Percy's less appealing characters. Our enthusiasm knew no boundaries or articulation. We loved Binx as surely as we loved, or hated, or despaired of ourselves. He had that wonderful, almost unaware sense of *vacancy* that still waits for us at every turn. The specific character of despair, Kierkegaard said, is precisely this: It is unaware of being despair.

There were moments, just moments, when John Bickerson Bolling of Metarie, La., did grow aware, when he beat the Malaise, even if he didn't think he had. For example on Page 99 of my edition of *The Moviegoer*:

> For some time now the impression has been growing upon me that everyone is dead. It happens when I speak to people. In the middle of a sentence it will come over me; yes, beyond a doubt, this is death. There is little to do but groan and make an excuse and slip away as quickly as one can. At such times it seems that the conversation is spoken by automatons who have no choice in what they say. I hear myself or someone else saying things like: "In my opinion the Russian people are a great people, but—" or "Yes, what you say about the hypocrisy of the North is unquestionably true. However—" and I think to myself: this is death. Lately it is all I can do to carry on such everyday conversations, because my cheek has developed a tendency to twitch of its own accord. Wednesday as I stood speaking to Eddie Lovell, I felt my eye closing in a broad wink.

Haven't you had that feeling? Don't you even now? Would you believe that in the middle of some board meeting or press conference or lovely occasion, it is all I can do to resist standing up and saying in a loud voice: *"Do you know all of us are going to die?"* I hold back; I don't want to be thought some kind of fanatic. But my soul thirsts. I can hear it panting. I keep running across the kind of phrase that caught Binx's attention (". . . hopefully awaiting the gradual convergence of the physical sciences and the social sciences") and that left him abandoned on the endless plateau of Malaise. Do you have any idea how many times a day an editorial page editor sees phrases like that?

I always liked sportswriters, but used to think of myself as a cut above. How many synonyms can you think of for Win, Lose, or Tie? How many ways to tell the same story, even if the names and stadia are different? But of late it's hit me. Political and social commentary are an unchanging game, too. Only the names change. How many synonyms are there for Win, Lose, Tie, and *hubris*? For just a blessed moment—I think it's blessed—one becomes aware of the Malaise, which may be the only way to overcome it.

It wasn't the same reading Walker Percy after *The Moviegoer*, though there were flashes in his other books. The desperate questions he raised were so much better than any of his wise answers. The Malaise has all the answers; it's the questions that still rouse and return us to life. That's why I'll keep reading *The Moviegoer*.

PAUL GREENBERG *is Editorial Page Editor of the* Pine Bluff Commercial.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Literature and Moral Purpose

Robertson Davies

It is tedious when a speaker begins by protesting modestly that he is inadequate to the task before him, or that he is the last person who should have been asked to discuss the theme of his address. We are apt to dismiss such wincing disclaimers as belonging to what Goldsmith called "the decorums of stupidity." But the fact is that speakers often *do* feel inadequate to their task, and I am one of them at this moment. "Why, then, did you accept the invitation to speak?" you ask. I did it because I was intrigued by the theme proposed, and wanted to think about it. I may even have been so vain as to suppose that I might say something illuminating about it. But as I thought and wrote and wrote and thought, I was driven to admit that I had bitten off a very large chaw, and that I could chew only a part of it.

The subject is "Literature and Moral Purpose." It is not a particularly engaging title, but I was unable to come up with anything better that was equally descriptive. What I am going to talk about is how far literature may be expected to discuss moral problems and what contribution it can make to their solution, without being untrue to itself.

I suppose I had better make some attempt to define or to give some general notion of what is meant by moral purpose. Is it not to give some guidance toward whatever is good as opposed to what is evil? But at once we meet a difficulty, for in some parts of the world things are considered to be good, or at least within the bounds of reasonable conduct, which are condemned elsewhere. Consider pederasty and sodomy, for instance, which were tolerated in the pagan world, but which until about the middle of this century were thought to be immoral in the Christian and Judaic world. But now the Christian and Judaic world, or a considerable part of it, has done a moral U-turn and what was condemned is tolerated, if not countenanced, even among members of the clergy, who are expected to be moral exemplars.

Presumably this is because among the seven Virtues, the Natural Virtues are regarded as less needful to the good life than the Supernatural Virtues. If one has Faith, Hope, and Charity, one may presumably manage with a smattering of Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, and Temperance. But these are very deep and stormy waters, and only subtle theologians can swim in them. As a literary man—specifically a novelist and a playwright—I must keep within the bounds of what I may be expected to know. And what I know is this: virtually all novelists, playwrights, and poets of serious artistic purpose become inevitably *involved* in problems of morality, but such writers are on dangerous and artistically ruinous ground when they allow their work to be *dominated* by moral purpose.

When, for example, one speaks of great works of imaginative literature that have an avowed moral purpose, one thinks at once of *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton the artist so overreached Milton the theologian that Satan emerges as by far the most interesting character in the poem, and we are all drawn to admire him; in *Paradise Regained*, where Satan is reduced from the proud rebel to a much lesser tempter and schemer, the genius of Milton seems to be less happy. Or consider *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which is remorselessly and unanswerably moral, so far as it goes, but which lives by the beauty of its style and its succession of vivid portraits and pictures. When we read that book as children, did we ever want to be Christian? Did we not yearn more toward one of the lesser roles, even that of Giant Despair? Reprobate children that we were, we thought that Christian was rather a pill, and that the others were full of exciting life.

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *the distinguished Canadian novelist, has received numerous awards and honors. This essay originated as the fifth annual Erasmus Lecture, sponsored by the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City.* *Copyright © by Robertson Davies 1990.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Literature which is moral before it is artistic is rarely on the level of Milton or Bunyan. When I was a boy, I was a voracious reader. My home had plenty of moral literature on its shelves, and I was urged to read it for my betterment. There was lots of other literature, as well, but I was not forbidden, only discouraged, from reading it as it was said to be "beyond me," which I quickly discovered meant that it dealt with life pretty much as life was, and not as the determinedly moral writers wanted me to think. My parents had both been brought up in uncompromisingly Christian homes, and so we had many books which they had won as Sunday School prizes—which meant that they had good memories rather than aggressively contrite hearts.

How *awful* those prize books were! I shall not bore you with too much detail about them, but I must mention one which was called *Striving to Help*. It was about a noble boy whose father was a business failure, not through any fault of his own but because evil men worked against him. The boy possessed a child's printing press, equipped with rubber type, and he single-handedly lifted his family out of despair by going into the printing business. He sought orders from temperance societies to print their notices, and thus he killed two moral birds with one stone, although evil boys often altered the bills he printed to give them a pro-alcohol bias. But he won through in the end, because right always triumphs. He was very decent to his father, and never rubbed it in that his father was a failure. To his mother, of course, he was an object of almost hysterical adoration. There was an Oedipal element in this story which, at the time, I did not appreciate.

I have since wondered if some of those writers of moral tales for youth knew just what they were doing. Even Louisa May Alcott—unquestionably a writer of substantial gifts—included puzzling things in her books. Think of *Little Men*, which I read with avidity. One of the little men is a boy called Ned, and he is a boy of wavering moral character; but at Plumstead School he comes under the influence of Professor Bhaer, a German pedagogue who has an unusual method of discipline. When Ned is naughty, the Professor does not punish him; oh, no—the Professor makes Ned strike *him* on the hands with the cane, as hard as he can, until Ned is reduced to tears, because he dearly loves and admires the Professor. Even as a boy, I thought there was something decidedly kinky about the Professor. But did Louisa May Alcott know it? (She was not wholly without kinks herself.)

But let us return to the noble boy in *Striving to Help*. That boy made me feel very cheap indeed, for I too had a boy's printing press, and it produced the messiest, worst-spelled, and most despicable work that anybody had ever seen. The most abject temperance society would have scorned to employ me. Fortunately, my father was not a failure, or my family would have sunk under the weight of my ineptitude.

Noble boys in fiction were the bane of my life. My family subscribed, on my behalf, to a journal called *The Youth's Companion*, which originated in Boston, and every month it arrived, heavy with tales of noble boys who imposed their moral superiority on everybody around them by much the same sort of admirable industry. In my dark heart I hated those boys. They were unfailingly noble in their behavior toward girls, and I confess that there were times when my feelings about girls fell below their standard. I knew quite a few girls, and they were divided between the voluptuously desirable and beastly little sneaks and tattletales.

Only one thing saved me, I now believe. The boys in the Sunday School books were all English, and the boys in *The Youth's Companion* were all Americans—usually Bostonians. I was a Canadian, and I grew up believing that Canadians were different—a lower order of being, incapable of morality in its highest reaches. One of the satisfactions of being a Canadian is that one is not expected to be a good example.

I gagged on tales of moral animals, like *Beautiful Joe*. You may not have encountered this powerfully moral dog, who met with much of the world's evil in the form of wicked and cruel masters. But Joe was a sort of Canine Christian, and what was more, a Total Abstainer; Joe's lips never touched alcohol. But I knew a few dogs in real life, most of whom were idiots, and whose moral behavior was well below Joe's standard, for Joe lived a life of unwavering chastity, and the dogs I knew did not.

I could not stomach *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, who presented me with a political puzzle especially hard for a Canadian. What was that boy, and what did he do? He was an American, but by chance he inherited a title and went to England and became a Lord, and thereafter was remorselessly democratic toward anyone who kept it firmly in mind that he *was* a Lord, and behaved accordingly. The Little Lord existed to hammer home two things that were presented as mighty truths: we must be democratic and we must recognize the moral superiority that goes with poverty. It was easy, I thought, to be a democrat if everybody toadied to you, and I wished that the Little Lord could spend a few days at the school I went to, where to be known as a tireless reader (for I could not conceal it) was to be an outcast. Many of my persecutors enjoyed the blessing of poverty, but it did not seem to improve their characters. They were savage, jealous, and without bowels of compassion.

My sanity was saved by the books I read on the sly. Dickens, where evil people were plentiful and often rich, successful, and attractive. Thackeray, where snobbery seemed to be the mainspring of much of the action. Thomas Hardy, where life was complicated by opposed moralities and the uncontrollable workings of Destiny, and where God was decidedly not a loving Father. I did not know it at the time, but of course these were the works of literary artists who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

observed life with keen eyes and wrote about what they saw, as their widely varying temperaments enabled them to see. When I myself became a writer, it was these whom I chose to follow, as best I could, and not the aggressive moralists.

When I went to Oxford, I fell in with a young man in my college who had already been ordained as a Presbyterian minister. He found out that I had ambitions as a playwright and he conceived a great scheme: we would collaborate on a series of plays based on the great moral tales of the Bible—The Sacrifice of Isaac, Moses and the Golden Calf, Naboth's Vineyard, and the like. I would write the plays, but he would supply the theology, the moral fervor, the zeal. I pointed out to him that in the eighteenth century, Mrs. Hannah More had had produced, in 1782, four Sacred Dramas: *Moses in the Bulrushes, David and Goliath, Belshazzar,* and *Daniel.* Even the authoress could not really like them. She wrote: "It would not be easy, I believe, to introduce Sacred Dramas on the English Stage. The scrupulous would think it profane, while the profane would think it dull." My friend the young dominie was not daunted: we would succeed where Mrs. More had failed. But I was not convinced. In my childhood I had seen sacred dramas—*Queen Esther* and *The Prodigal Son*—and even in such a stage-struck child as I they produced a profound ennui. I had a lot of trouble getting rid of that ambitious young parson, I may tell you.

The problem was that I had changed my personal definition of the word "moralist." For me, it meant not someone who imposes a moral system upon his art, but someone who sees as much of life as he can, and who draws what conclusions he may. What courses of action lead to what results? Are there absolute standards of good and evil? To what degree is what appears to be acceptable to society rooted in the truth of a particular man or woman? To what degree may the acceptance of a popular or socially approved code of conduct define or perhaps distort a character? Where do the springs of behavior lie; to what degree may they be controlled; how far is a human creature accountable to his group or his country or his professed belief (or unbelief) for what he does? How far is it permissible to talk of what a human creature *makes* of his life, and to what degree does an element of which he may be unaware in himself *make* his life for him? How far may we accept the dictum that life is a dream, and that we are creatures in that dream, which is being dreamed by something of which we have no knowledge? These, it seems to me, are the concerns of a true moralist. He is an observer and a recorder; he may not permit himself to be the judge, except by indirection.

II

In the comments that follow it may seem to you that I dwell heavily on writers of the nineteenth century and earlier, to the neglect of writers of the century in which we live. Of course, there are many writers of comparatively recent times who might be discussed: one thinks at once of Hemingway and Faulkner in the United States, and of Graham Greene, James Joyce, and that resounding moralist Evelyn Waugh in Great Britain; Marcel Proust's great novel is virtually a long disquisition on vanity, and much might be said of Thomas Mann, of Günter Grass. In the drama, one of the most deeply searching moralists of our time is Arthur Miller, and in Britain Alan Ayckbourn, under a cloak of sardonic comedy, presents us with some complex moral problems. But of these and of more recent writers I shall say nothing, because the nearer a writer is to us, the more varied debate and opinion becomes. I will stay with writers of an earlier day, about whose work the dust of dispute has in some degree subsided.

It may appear to you that I have weighted the scales unfairly against books of avowed moral purpose by talking of Sunday School prizes and publications for children. Certainly there have been widely accepted works of fiction and drama that are not so simple. I think of the famous play *George Barnwell, or the London Merchant* which was written in 1731 and enjoyed something like 150 years of popularity on the stage. It was often performed on holidays as a moral warning to apprentices who, like Barnwell, might fall into the company of evil women and—what was worse—rob their masters. One thinks of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* powerful both as a play and a novel. There were books like *Danesbury House,* which Mrs. Henry Wood wrote in 1860, and which won a prize of one hundred pounds from the Scottish Temperance League because of its description of the evils of drink; this was the first of Mrs. Henry Wood's remarkable flow of novels, all of which were extremely popular—and all of which were of a determinedly moral tendency. But their morality has not been able to save them, for a simple reason: morality changes from age to age and her morality was dictated by her society. The deeper truths about human nature which form the foundations of great drama and fiction are of more enduring stuff.

Compare, for instance, Mrs. Henry Wood's most famous novel, *East Lynne,* with Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.* The theme is the same: a married woman falls hopelessly in love with a man who wearies of her; she destroys the peace of her husband and is estranged from her beloved child; in the end, having ruined her life, she dies. But in *East Lynne* her infatuation is dealt with very heavily on the basis of what Mrs. Grundy might think. Who can forget the line from the play, spoken by the heroine's father: "O Isobel! you, an Earl's daughter! How utterly have you forgotten yourself!" Tolstoy treats Anna's defection as it reflects on the career of her husband who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is brilliantly portrayed as a wronged, if unsympathetic, man. But chiefly Tolstoy tells us of the moral destruction of Anna herself, of her abandonment to a passion which she finds overwhelming but which seems from the outside to be merely foolish. We see Anna's ruin and her final realization of what she is and what she has done, and her suicide. Anna Karenina is pitiable, and she is almost noble in her passion, but we cannot escape the realization that she is also something of a fool. Not so the heroine of *East Lynne*; she sins and she is rapturously forgiven; much of her conduct must be described as sneaky, but nobody seems to care; she dies at last in a glow of virtue, mourned by her husband, whom she has treated badly, as if she had been an angel all her life. Anna dies because it is her fate. Lady Isobel dies, one suspects, to make all the other characters feel cheap.

Why has Anna Karenina lived, whereas Lady Isobel is forgotten by all except a few hobbyists like myself? Because in *East Lynne* the cards are all stacked to the benefit of the principal character, the repentant sinner, the woman whose sins are forgiven her chiefly because she is the heroine of a popular novel. But Anna Karenina is a human being, not a doll devised to perform in a doll's drama. Anna's faults are plain for all to see, and the morality of the novel dips far below the surface of what was considered moral in the Russian society of the 1870s. We read it now, in a very different moral climate, for its fine understanding of what may happen when passion overcomes prudence, which is a timeless theme, and of the way in which Fate may intervene in an apparently ordinary life.

Of course not all fine fiction is written at the Tolstoy level. There are many literary artists who do their best to represent man in society and man at odds with society whose literary gift does not take them into the front rank of writers. A gift is not to be commanded. We know how grievously Tolstoy himself sank in the latter part of his career when he often wrote to prove a point and drive home a lesson, rather than to record what he saw and what he understood intuitively from what he saw. The genius of fiction seems to be always at war with orthodoxies, always resistant to established creeds, because the literary artist is drawn toward those things which are exceptions to orthodoxy and which seem opposed to creeds. And this is not because literary artists are necessarily rebellious (though some have been so) but because they are wary and unrestingly observant. They are well aware of the sunlight, but they are driven also to examine the shadow that it inevitably creates.

If I seem to be talking as if writers have an orthodoxy of their own—an orthodoxy of unorthodoxy, so to speak, a determination to go against the grain of society—let me disclaim any such intention at once. Writers are not unrestingly intellectual in their approach to life; indeed, some acquaintance with the history of literature shows how far authors, in the main, fall below the determined intellectuals in their power of analyzing and theorizing.

I once got myself into some trouble by saying that authors are not, as a rule, highly intelligent. People attacked me and contradicted me because they were certain that anyone who can create plots and characters must be a person of powerful intelligence. But I defend myself by saying that I do not take intellectuality, as it commonly appears in society, with entire seriousness. The power to argue strongly and what I may call the puzzle-solving and examination-passing cast of mind are often the possession of people of arid and limited perception and uneducated heart. In art, and in science as well, it is the power to see what other people do not see, to jump to conclusions *and to be right*, to see through a brick wall, in short to be creative, that counts. Intuition is an abused word, but if we define it as the power to apprehend things without the intervention of a reasoning or logical process, we are talking about something which is not intelligence in the accepted sense of the word. Anybody who has tried it knows what a poor tool logic is when it is applied to questions of human conduct. A very great logician defined intuition as "the perception of shadows," and it is the perception of shadows that is at the root of the greatest poetry and fiction and drama.

Because they are not unrestingly intellectual, writers may not be strongly aware of the intuitive impulse that drives them. Consider Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a novel which has survived for almost four centuries and is still regarded as one of the great masterpieces of world fiction.

Its story is of the adventures of a gentleman whose wits have been turned by reading old books of romance and chivalry. He equips himself absurdly with miserable armor and an old wretched horse, and he rides forth in search of adventures. The story is not told with tidy literary art; it is a rambling and often coarse tale of the foolishness of a mad old man who is mocked, beaten, and humiliated until, on his deathbed, he understands the folly of his delusion.

The book is often read superficially. More often it is not read at all by people who are nevertheless aware of it, because the story is familiar from stage, film, and operatic versions, and has given our language the word "quixotic," meaning actuated by impracticable ideals of honor. But if we read the book carefully and sympathetically, we find the secret of its extraordinary power. It is the first example in popular literature of the profoundly religious theme of victory plucked from defeat, which has strong Christian implications. The Don, who is courteous and chivalrous toward those who ill-use him and who is ready to help the distressed and attack tyranny or cruelty at whatever the cost to himself, is manifestly a greater man than the dull-witted peasants and cruel nobles

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who torment and despise him. We love him because his folly is Christ-like and his victory is not of this world.

Is this what Cervantes meant? I cannot say, for I am not a Cervantist, but this is certainly what he wrote, and we know that such a book could not have been written except by a man of great spirit. This is the puzzle that has led some impetuous critics to assume that a writer is sometimes an *idiot savant* who writes better than he knows, and who, of course, needs critics to explain him to the world and probably also to himself.

The theme of victory plucked from defeat and the folly which is greater than conventional wisdom is at the root of many novels. One of the best and most enduring is Charles Dickens' first success, *The Pickwick Papers*. When we first meet Mr. Pickwick, he is an almost buffoon-like character, but when he is unjustly imprisoned, his character deepens and he becomes aware of the misery and injustice that is part of the society in which he lives. By the end of the book, Mr. Pickwick is a man of real worth. It is interesting and very important that Mr. Pickwick is dependent on his valet, Sam Weller, a streetwise youth who is to him what Sancho Panza is to Don Quixote; that is, an element of common sense and practical wisdom that is lacking in his master. When we think about it, we see that the great virtues are exemplified in these four people: Don Quixote and Mr. Pickwick possess faith, hope, charity, justice, and fortitude, but they need their servants to supply prudence and temperance. A character who possessed all the seven great virtues would never do as the hero of a novel; he would be perfect, and in consequence unsympathetic, for we are impatient and suspicious of human perfection. But when a hero who has most of the virtues is partnered by a helper and server who has what he lacks, great and magical fiction may result.

Did Dickens know what he was doing? Here I am on safer ground than I am with Cervantes, for Dickens has been one of my lifelong studies, and I think he knew *exactly* what he was doing, in this and in all the novels that followed *Pickwick Papers*. Dickens' life showed him to be a man who was far from intellectual, and sadly astray in much of his personal conduct, but when he was at his desk he was in total command, and he knew very well that, after a shaky start, he was working with a great theme.

What, throughout his career, was Dickens doing? There are critics who insist that he was a great social reformer, a scourge of the society and laws of his time. So indeed he was, though a careful study of his work suggests that he was often *behind* reform rather than before it. His famous attack on the iniquitous Yorkshire schools that existed as places to conceal and forget illegitimate children came after those schools had already been attacked and were in the process of being investigated. Certainly he attacked the Civil Service and the Court of Chancery savagely in *Bleak House*, but whether any changes came as a result is open to question. The world has a strong tendency to separate what it reads in novels from what it experiences in real life, and although a reformer like Dickens may rouse public indignation, it is carrying things a little far to attribute reforms to his interventions. Abraham Lincoln may indeed have said that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* started the American Civil War, but one suspects that in his heart he knew better. So, was Charles Dickens moved by moral fervor when he wrote?

Yes, he was in part, but he was moved more strongly and effectively by something else, and that was the instinct of an author—a very great author—that worked within him. There were plenty of reforming writers in his time, and in some of them indignation burned more fiercely than it did in Dickens. There was one, Henry Cockton, whom you may well be excused for not knowing, who wrote a very popular book called *Valentine Vox* (1840), which was a furious attack on the private asylums for the insane that during the nineteenth century served very often as prisons for inconvenient relatives. There is some reason to believe that *Valentine Vox* had its effect in provoking investigation, but who reads it now? Why? Because Cockton was no Dickens, and except for eccentrics like myself, his book is unreadable. So, what was it Dickens had which places him so high in the ranks of writers in English that Henry Cockton lacked? It was the instinct, the nature of the author. Can it be defined? Let us try.

It was Plato who first said that we gain our knowledge of the world about us by means of four functions, which we may call Thinking, Feeling, Sensation, and Intuition. Thinking is reasoning, untinged by emotion; Feeling is the forming of what are now called "value judgments" on the basis of emotion; Sensation is the quality which gives us the physical reality of things—of height, depth, softness, hardness, distance, temperature, and all such palpable things; and last is Intuition, which is the perception of possibilities. We all have these four functions in some measure, but one is likely to be dominant and thus determine our approach to life. The author is likely to be particularly strong in Intuition.

It is Intuition that enables the writer to see beyond the facts of a situation, to embroider and extend their scope, and to discover possibilities that do not appear to the Thinker, for instance, or the Sensation man. I used to tell my students that every Monday morning the story of *Othello* was reported in the morning papers, but it took a Shakespeare to see its possibilities. I reminded them also that Henrik Ibsen said that he read virtually nothing but the Bible and the newspapers, because it was there that he found all he needed for his dramas. Human experience is *not* illimitable; the same things tend to repeat themselves in all our lives; it is the individuality of our response that gives

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them their personal quality. Dickens encountered the same poverty, squalor, meanness, magnanimity, and heroically endured pain in the London of his childhood that was met with by his boy companion, Bob Fagin, but it was his intuitive quality that enabled him to people the scene with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, with Bill Sykes and Nancy, with Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, with Uriah Heep and the grandiloquent Crummleses. I think it is superficial to say that he invented his characters; rather it should be said that he *discerned* them in the welter of life and experience that pressed upon him; he saw the gold in the ore, and he made the gold palpable to his readers, then and now.

The vitality of Dickens' work, I suggest, lay not in his indignation over long-dead abuses; there was plenty of indignation in Victorian England. It was in his extraordinary perception and illumination of the life that lay about him, inanimate as well as animate. He was not nearly so aroused about the incompetence and dishonesty of the hospital nurses of his time as he was fascinated by the incompetence and dishonesty of Sairey Gamp and her partner Betsey Prigg; he did not care so much about the grinding slowness of the Court of Chancery as he cared about Miss Flyte, whom it had driven mad, and the Jarndyce family, whom it impoverished. When he looked at the Lord Chancellor seated in his court, wigged and gowned and attended by all the splendor of precedent and ritual, he was not a lawyer who had reached the top of his profession, but Old Krook who sat in his nearby junkshop surrounded, like the Lord Chancellor, by the dusty evidence of ruined households and broken lives.

It tells us nothing to say that Dickens was an artist. Why was he an artist, and what did his artistry incline him toward as a writer? Not, I think, to causes far better pursued in Parliament and the newspapers, but to people and things and the raw stuff of life in which he saw wonders hidden from other eyes. If you want to find out what Dickens' opinions on social subjects were, apart from his novels, read what he wrote for the popular papers he edited; you will be astonished at how commonplace and un-Dickensian many of those articles are. The editor was driven by moral purpose; the great author was driven by intuition.

Do not mistake me. I do not say that Dickens *lacked* moral purpose; he had as much as the next man and more than many. But it was not moral purpose that made him a great writer.

There have been writers, and good ones, who have rejected any suggestion of moral purpose in their work. Vladimir Nabokov wrote, in a letter to a friend, "Writers have no social responsibility," and certainly he admits of none in his own novels. But in the three published volumes of his lectures on Western Literature, he has to recognize the powerful social responsibility of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, to name no others. Unless one writes extremely astringent novels, as Nabokov himself did, it is difficult to avoid some influence of social responsibility because it appears to be something deeply rooted in human nature. Ever since *Aesop's Fables*, mankind has had a strong appetite for stories from which a moral is drawn directly, or in which some moral attitude is implied.

If you truly want to discover what people expect from what they read, forget about great writers and masterpieces for a while, and look at the bulk of popular novels—the kind of novels that sell in the hundreds of thousands in drug stores and airports, and which are never reviewed in literary journals. G. K. Chesterton, a perceptive and unjustly neglected critic, wrote in 1905, "Men's basic assumptions and everlasting energies are to be found in penny dreadfuls and half-penny novelettes."

To rise above that level, but to deal still with a genre of literature that is hugely popular, consider the detective novels that sell in such astronomical numbers, and are eagerly passed from hand to hand by enthusiasts. I do not suppose that many of their readers ever give a thought to moral purpose, but their attitude could be summed up as "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Scores of detective novels are rooted in the words of Exodus: "If any mischief follow them thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

And in these stories, so various in their form and so widely separated in the kind of society they depict, who is the instrument of the Lord's vengeance, who brings the thief or the murderer to his just reward? It is the Great Detective, of course. Perhaps, like Sherlock Holmes, he is the Thinking Man, the cold reasoner. Or he may be the Man of Feeling, as in Chesterton's Father Brown. He may be the aristocratic Lord Peter Wimsey, or the immobile intellectual Nero Wolfe. In the works of Miss P. D. James, the acknowledged queen of the modern detective story, he may be Adam Dalgleish of New Scotland Yard, who is a poet when he is not on the trail of a murderer, and plainly a Man of Intuition. But whatever Platonic type he may belong to, anybody who has given even superficial attention to medieval religious drama recognizes in the Great Detective the figure called Divine Correction. He is the restorer of balance, the dispenser of justice, working on behalf of a higher authority.

What higher authority? The mass of readers might balk at calling that authority God, but they might agree to calling it Poetic Justice, the desire deep in the human heart to see evil punished, however delightedly as readers they may have bathed in that evil for two-thirds of the book.

Even in the much-abused television series, and the movies where the villains wreak hideous punishment on the Good Guys, the Good Guys must triumph in the end, or there would be outraged protest from armies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of viewers.

You may say that in this the public is having its cake and eating it too. I make no denial. That has always been the public's way, whenever it can be managed. It is neatly summed up in the story about the little boy who burst into his mother's drawing room, crying, "Ma—I caught a toad, and I bashed him and jumped on him and ran over him with the lawn mower till—(suddenly seeing the parson, who had come to tea)—till God called him home." The moral attitudes of the majority of people are not intellectually reasoned but they are deeply rooted. Evil must be punished, one way or another. But while the evil is going on, we do not want to miss a gunshot, or a blow, or a drop of gore. As an English satirist wrote a century ago:

> It's human natur, p'raps—if so,
> Oh, isn't human natur low!

Perhaps, in a more generous mood, we may say that human nature is not so much low as unreflecting. It is people like ourselves who have determined to reflect on this theme of literature and moral purpose, and I have put forward my opinion that literature at its higher levels must beware of allowing moral purpose to assume a dominant place in its creation. Moral purpose, if it asserts itself as it has done in much of the finest literature we possess, will come unbidden from the place where literature of the serious kind has its origin, and it will be part of the fabric of the whole work, and not something that can be abstracted and discussed as an element in itself.

Consider Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857). In it we follow the brief life of Emma Bovary, who is fated to live in provincial dullness with a dull if worthy husband. She is not a woman of strong character or intellect; she has been sentimentally educated, and what intelligence she has is poorly employed; she seeks a broader life through ill-fated romances with men of no greater intellectual or moral stature than herself; and in the end she dies wretchedly, a disappointed woman.

It sounds a dismal theme, but as Flaubert treats it, it is transfixing in its depth of understanding and its illumination of a kind of life that is led by millions of people. Is Emma treated by the author with compassion? No, she is treated with justice. Has the author no pity for Emma? It does not appear, but it is plain to the understanding reader that the author has great pity for mankind. It is not the pity that slops and gushes, nor would it be just to Flaubert to say that it attempts to be godlike. It is the pity of the observer, the recorder of things as they are rather than as they should be.

It is significant that on a famous occasion when a lady said to him, "How could you write so profoundly about Emma Bovary? Where did you find your extraordinary understanding of woman's nature?" Flaubert replied, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi."

He spoke the simple truth. A writer finds his themes and his characters in the depth of his own being, and his understanding of them is an understanding of himself. This is not to say that Don Quixote is Miguel de Cervantes or that Mr. Pickwick is Charles Dickens in any simple sense. It is to say that Cervantes and Dickens are capable of the Don and Mr. Pickwick; they embrace the character, not because it is an obvious part of their own nature, but because it is a possibility which they are capable of seizing and bringing to a fictional life. They have intuitions of the Don and of Pickwick, as Flaubert had his intuition of Madame Bovary.

Incidentally, it is nonsense to say, as some extreme feminists say now, that a man is incapable of writing perceptively about a woman; nobody, so far as I know, has ever said that a woman is incapable of writing perceptively about a man. George Eliot, one of the truly great writers of the Victorian age, could draw men with a breathtaking verisimilitude and perception. It needs no genius from the genetic laboratories to tell us that in every man there lies a substantial physical element which is feminine, and that in every woman there is a substantial genetic element of masculinity. Authors, it appears, have unusual access to this contra-sexual side of themselves, which is not only mental, but physical. Heavy books are written now to explain this androgynous element in human character, but great numbers of people of all sorts have always been aware of it, and artists of any significance have always been among their number. Perhaps we may say of the author what Walt Whitman said of himself. He is large, he contains multitudes.

III

To develop this theme of intuition, it will be necessary for me to speak of personal experience. What I am about to say is not prompted by vanity, but by the fact that only by telling you what I know from my own experience to be true can I hope to carry conviction.

When people speak of intuition they seem as a usual thing to mean some sudden leap in the dark, some instantaneous flash of enlightenment. Certainly that is intuition of one sort. But there is another kind of intuition, which is the slumbrous, slow-moving kind, and it is not so widely recognized.

Some years ago I wrote a book called *Fifth Business*, which attracted a flattering amount of attention. For six or seven years before I wrote it I was very busy about some work that demanded the best of my attention, it seemed, and all of my energy. I had been entrusted with the task of setting in motion a new college in my university, exclusively for graduate students. But however hard one works at a task, one is never totally absorbed in it. Personal matters, family

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matters, involvements of all kinds must be given their necessary attention. And in addition to these things, one is never free of one's fantasy life, or the life that asserts itself in dreams. During all the years that I was busy in the way I have described, I was visited from time to time by a scene which appeared in my fantasy life—when tired, or when dropping off to sleep, or when traveling in an airplane when a better-organized man would have had his lap full of papers and letters.

I have called it a scene, and that is what it was; the action in it was slight, but the picture was vivid. The picture was of a village street; it is six o'clock at night and as it is two or three days after Christmas it is dark; snow is everywhere. Two boys are in the street; one is hurrying home to his supper, and the other calls abuse after him and throws a snowball at him; I know that inside that snowball there is a stone and that it can hurt, and that it is meant to hurt; but just as the snowball is about to find its mark, the first boy dodges suddenly in front of two people, a man and a woman, who are walking in the street, and the snowball hits the woman on the head; she falls to the ground.

There it is. An incident that takes about thirty seconds to act out. Does it mean anything? It recurred so often that I decided that it was stupid to ignore it any longer, so I called up the scene and invited my imagination to do what it could with that material. In a very short time, I knew who all the people in the fantasy were, and what the outcome of the incident was. The book demanded to be written. And as I wrote, over a period of several months, the remainder of the story and its outcome appeared as they were needed. And not only did the story of *Fifth Business* appear, but other aspects of the same story which made up two subsequent novels, resulting in a trilogy.

I assure you that as I wrote those books, I had no sense of moral purpose whatever. I have never thought of myself as a moralist. What I was writing about might be summed up in two themes. First, that the result of a single action may spread like the circles that expand when a stone is thrown into a pond, until they touch places and people unguessed at by the person who threw the stone; in my story it took sixty years for the flight of that stone-laden snowball to expend itself. Second, I wanted to explore the matter of childhood culpability for evil-doing—may a child be guilty of true evil? And what may be the outcome of deeply felt childhood guilt?

These, I protest, are a novelist's themes and it was as a novelist that I treated them. I was surprised when some critics decided that I was a moralist. Of course there were moral aspects of my story, but to me they were of far less importance than character and incident. Character and incident were the results of intuition, not of careful intellectual work, and when critics wrote about the book as if I had decided on a moral theme first and then cloaked it in fiction, I was at once amused and indignant.

IV

This, I am sure, is the way that real books—I mean books which are not simply manufactured for the market from themes popular in the market—get themselves written. They have already formed themselves deep in the unconscious of the writer, from which they can be coaxed or dragged when they will not emerge gently and readily. Before a word was put on paper, the book existed as a possibility.

This accounts, I think, for the unsatisfactory nature of some very great books when they are looked at from the viewpoint of the literary critic. Critics appear to have in their minds some sort of Platonic Ideal of what a novel should be, and any novel that does not conform to that ideal they declare to be "flawed." I once asked a member of this Druid circle if she could name any novel which was not flawed. After melancholy reflection, she declared that she could not. Even Henry James, the high priest of the finely crafted novel, showed flaws, at points where outraged artistic instinct refused to be bullied in the name of academic excellence.

We all know these great, flawed books. *War and Peace* is a horror to the literary critic, but it is a work of unquestioned greatness. So is *Moby Dick*, which seems at times as if it would exhaust the patience of the most besotted reader. Dostoevsky and Balzac never know when enough is enough. But would we wish to be without any of the great, flawed masterpieces? No, we would not.

Nor would we say that we valued them first of all for the emphatic moral purpose that unquestionably appears in them. Again and again as we read the great works of fiction, we hear voices afar crying, "God is not mocked"; "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." But can we find any evidence that these things were written up over the desk of the great author? Why, then, do they assert themselves in his work?

I have said that I am not a moralist. Nor am I a philosopher or a theologian. So when I suggest, or tentatively hint, that perhaps morality is part of the structure of man, that it has some archetypal root, I am not speaking as anything but a novelist, an artist.

Having said that, let me hasten to add that I do not use the word "artist" in any grandiose sense, nor do I claim particular status because I apply it to myself. The word, traced to its origin, means simply "a maker," and not necessarily a superior being, though, as Aldous Huxley said more than sixty years ago, we live in a time when anybody who chooses to call himself an artist seems to imagine that the world owes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him a living. Literature is unquestionably an art, but we must be cautious in whatever claims we make for it.

Everyone is aware of the sad plight of Salman Rushdie, who has offended the world of Islam. I will not say anything about the rights and wrongs of that matter, because I do not know enough about it to do so usefully. But I was sorry when, in a recent public address, Mr. Rushdie appealed to what he called "the sacredness of art" to justify what he had written in *The Satanic Verses.* An age that has so often urged us to regard the Bible simply as literature is no time to throw a cloak of sanctity over a novel. Art has no overriding "sacredness" that lifts it above the other works of man. Some books, because of their splendor of conception and execution, are unquestionably art on the highest level, and are so valued. But their glory does not spill over on the run-of-the-mill works of the journeymen of literature, and writers are on shaky ground when they think otherwise.

So, to sum up, I have given an opinion that literature may indeed have a moral purpose when the moral judgment rises naturally from the work of art and is answered by a strong inner conviction in the reader. Morality which is applied cosmetically to catch a particular taste is found in many books, but not in the best books. I have confined my remarks pretty well to fiction, and of fiction I may say that it is by its nature a secular form of art, taking the whole of life as its province, and impatient of bonds of any sort, including those of popular morality. But if, as I suspect, some moral purposes exist deep in the psyche of man, they are certain to rise to the surface in literature of the highest order. FT

NOVEMBER POEM

Leaves
no wind
could wrench
from earlier
trees,
in this
windstill
now
let go.
Their fall
is soundless
vertical
as a spider's
twig-
to-
ground
descent
deus
ex
machina.

E. Castendyk Briefs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Christian West?

Wolfhart Pannenberg and Richard John Neuhaus

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS: 1992 is scheduled to be a very big year for moving toward European unity. Specifics will be changed as a result of the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, and especially in light of German reunification, but the continuing move toward European unity seems to be clear. Our purpose here is to explore what European unity might mean for cultural and religious identity in Europe and the world.

WOLFHART PANNENBERG: Yes, economic unity and the move toward a common currency have clear implications that, in my judgment, make European political union almost inevitable. We have some idea of what economic and political union might look like, but I agree with you that the big remaining questions are questions of culture.

RJN: And, at the heart of culture, of course, is religion, meaning those ideas and traditions that are considered most binding.

WP: There will remain important diversities in Europe, especially diversities of language. While there are different national cultures, however, there is a sufficient degree of common substance to warrant our speaking of a European culture—admittedly, a diverse rather than uniform culture. There are common roots, and one of those is most certainly Christianity. But it is by no means the only common root. There is the shared experience of medievalism, of humanism, of the rise of the nation state, of the Enlightenment, of industrialism, for instance. Europeans have in common that they have, in different ways, been through these experiences. Although I say these are "other" roots, it would also be true to say that they are all related in one way or another to Christianity.

RJN: European culture—and America to the extent that it is an extension of that culture—has its sources in Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Many have argued that the legacy of Jerusalem shaped those of Athens and Rome, but then the religious influence was dissipated with the rise of the secular Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Today Europe is perceived to be thoroughly secularized, and yet we hear people talking about something like a Christian renascence in connection with European unity.

WP: I do not think it is accurate to blame the Enlightenment for secularization. In the Protestant countries of Europe, the Enlightenment was certainly not anti-Christian. The French Enlightenment, on the other hand, especially after the driving out of the Huguenots, was very much against Christianity; that is to say, against the Roman Catholic Church. But in the Protestant countries, in Germany and England, for instance, the Enlightenment was, at least in its early stages, closely and sympathetically connected with Christianity. It was understood as a further development of Protestantism itself. John Locke, for instance, certainly did not see himself as an enemy of Christianity. He wanted to open the Christian heritage to rationality and experience. Isaac Newton and others in England and Scotland had the same intention. In Germany, one thinks of philosophers such as Leibniz and Christian Wolff, and of the great poet, Lessing.

RJN: So in this light the Enlightenment is seen as a further unfolding of the Reformation. You are saying that the militantly secular Enlightenment was essentially an anti-Catholic phenomenon?

WOLFHART PANNENBERG *is Professor of Systematic Theology on the Protestant Theological Faculty at the University of Munich and Director of the Institute for Fundamental Theology and Ecumenics.*
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is Editor-in-Chief of* FIRST THINGS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WP: Originally, that was the case. And that helps explain the profound differences between the English revolution of the seventeenth century and the American revolution, on the one hand, compared with the French revolution. Of course, when we think about the causes of secularization, we have to go back before the Enlightenment. Here we come upon the wars of religion that resulted from the controversies of the sixteenth century. The wars of religion were the decisive factor in the cultural change that became evident around the middle of the seventeenth century. More and more people, especially the rulers, drew the conclusion that society had to be rebuilt on a basis that abstracts from religious disputes.

RJN: Here, then, we see the beginnings of the privatizing of religion in order to protect the public square from religious warfare. But this was not, at the time, viewed as being anti-Christian or anti-religious.

WP: Exactly. These people, or at least most of them, continued to think of themselves as Christians. They thought they were advancing a more enlightened Christianity.

RJN: So what the rulers of Europe after the mid-seventeenth century were trying to do was to rescue morality, especially civil morality, for the public arena by keeping doctrinal and ecclesiastical disputes in the private sphere.

WP: Yes, their social reconstruction was based on conceptions of human nature drawn from notions of natural law, natural religion, the natural political order, and so forth. In this way, the Enlightenment was not so much an assault upon religion as an attempt to tame and universalize it for civic purposes.

RJN: Whatever the intention, you would agree that the result has been, among other things, the thorough secularization of European life?

WP: Yes and no. The Enlightenment, as such, is not the enemy. It is a legitimate part of the Christian heritage. In its German and English forms, its protagonists explicitly invoked Christian reasoning in the Reformation tradition. For instance, the key idea of freedom drew on Luther's understanding of Christian freedom. Similarly, of course, with the role of conscience in moral discernment. And think of the influence of Calvin's teaching about the immediacy of God's rule over human beings, unmediated by monarchies and the such. Surely no one can doubt that Calvinism was directly responsible for the development of democratic ideas in seventeenth-century England. So there is this close connection between Protestantism and modernity that should not be obscured.

It is not modernity that is estranged from Christianity. The fault lies with the wars of religion. That experience forced people who thought responsibly about the social order to develop a morality that could be supported by religion but would not get embroiled in those fatal religious disputes. The problem, of course, is that abstracting from doctrine led to a very shallow view of religion. Such a religion and morality was abstracted from the most important questions about what is true. This tendency, in turn, favored in the long run the French form of Enlightenment.

RJN: A form of Enlightenment that was revolutionary in a quite different way, including intense hostility to religion. This is the Enlightenment that has had such a powerful influence over the last two centuries, and far beyond the borders of France. But, if you trace these developments to the earlier wars of religion, it follows that you believe Christian unity, or ecumenism, is essential to reconstituting the moral foundations of Western culture.

WP: Very much so. We cannot speak about recovering the Christian sources of culture without attending to the break between Rome and the Reformation traditions. Any attempted recovery that would try to bracket Protestantism could not relate in a genuine way to modernity either. That is because of the close connections between Protestantism and early modernity, the Enlightenment, the rise of democratic ideas, and so forth.

RJN: Your argument, then, is that any acceptable notion of Christian culture must mean an emphatically post-Enlightenment culture. Are you worried that some Catholics and Protestants want to reconstitute a pre-Enlightenment situation?

WP: Well, my apprehensions are that there are some indications on the Roman Catholic side of wanting to reestablish a pre-Enlightenment connection between Christianity and European culture. It is true that the Second Vatican Council went a long way toward incorporating basic themes of modernity, but then two different directions appeared. Here I do not mean the reactionary forces of traditionalism that wanted to go back to the situation immediately prior to the Council. I mean, rather, Roman Catholics who had opposed the neoscholasticism of theology prior to the Council, but who had the dream of reconstituting something like the situation of the early Christian centuries during the patristic period. This group, generally speaking, had little sympathy for modern developments.

RJN: Their passion was *ressourcement,* or returning to the sources.

WP: Yes, and their patristic work had a great influence in the decades before the Council. Their project was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

directed against what they viewed as the excessive narrowness of neoscholasticism. Of course, Thomas himself was not so narrow, but twentieth-century Thomism certainly was. So the opposition to that narrowness came in large part from a renascence of patristic studies. But I said there were two directions. The other was represented by theologians who had been dealing with Reformation thought and therefore, also, Protestantism's engagement with modernity. There was, then, the *ressourcement* group that wanted the church to reappropriate the great time of the ancient fathers, and the *aggiornamento* tendency that wanted to open the church to the contributions of modernity. Although both groups opposed the narrow Thomism of neoscholasticism—and they did succeed in breaking its hold on the church—they themselves were often working in different directions. In terms of specific figures, you could say that Cardinal Ratzinger represents the *ressourcement* direction, and Hans Küng that of *aggiornamento*.

RJN: Your claim is that the *ressourcement* or patristic party, generally speaking, has not come to terms with modernity, and is still suspicious of the very idea. It is therefore tempted to favor a pre-Enlightenment cultural reconstitution. While the *aggiornamento* party, having lost touch with Christian roots, has embraced modernity uncritically and therefore has little effect on culture because it is not very different from the culture that it would affect.

WP: At least that is how the two groups see each other, and there is considerable truth in those depictions, I think.

RJN: This pope, John Paul II, has talked any number of times about rediscovering or reviving the Christian soul of Europe. What do you make of what he has been saying, and how does it fit into your view of contending schools of thought in the Roman Catholic Church?

WP: In principle, I very much welcome the guidance he is giving. In light of our discussion, however, you will understand if I say that I see some dangers. There is a danger that Roman Catholics will attempt a direct relinking with medieval and ancient Christianity, thus excluding the Reformation and, of course, modernity. We should not underestimate the number of people who worry about that. Obviously, such a direct relinking is not possible, for the nations of Europe will not respond to a call to return to their Christian roots if that means that they should forget their entire history in the modern era. This is why we must see the history of Europe as a continuum, from its roots up to the present time. That simply has to include the Reformation, and the painful history of Christian division that followed. All parties to that history must remember, and repent, and face up to the consequences of our divisions.

RJN: In that connection, you have worked for some years on an ecumenical project and the report has just been published here (*The Condemnations of the Reformation Era*, Fortress). That project was sponsored by the Roman Catholic and Protestant bishops in Germany, and it suggests that the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century should no longer be considered in force. I assume this is part of what you mean by remembering and repenting.

WP: Exactly. Work such as this is, of course, relevant to ecclesial unity. But for precisely that reason it is also relevant to the question of Christianity and Western culture. We cannot recall the people of Europe, the nations of Europe, to the Christian heritage if that heritage continues to represent division. It is only in the context of ecumenism that there is a chance for people to see Christianity as a possible source of cultural unity and promise.

RJN: There are many people in Europe who are very marginally Christian or not Christian at all. And many of them feel threatened by talk about Christian culture; they might even feel threatened by this conversation. It sounds to them as though somebody is proposing a return to an oppressive past. You would say that they shouldn't feel threatened, but shouldn't they? Might it not be that recovering the Christian core of European culture would in fact threaten some aspects of modernity?

WP: Oh, some may have the fears that you describe, but I remember that in the years of Vatican Council II in the 1960s there was an enormous spirit of expectancy and hope in Europe. In Germany, certainly, there was a sense that something very important was underway—important not only for the churches, but for society as a whole. People expected a real breakthrough in the relationship between the churches, a new expression of Christian unity, maybe even a new moral foundation for our common life. But, of course, it did not happen; at least it did not happen quickly. And the public mind is impatient, so, if something does not happen quickly, it is soon forgotten. A moment of opportunity was missed. But we should remember that time, because it means that that kind of hopeful expectancy, that kind of longing, might still be there in a latent form.

RJN: Also among people who are not Christians, you think?

WP: Yes, but most Europeans think of themselves as Christian, even if they don't go to church. In Germany, for example, 80 percent of the people are members of the churches, they pay their church tax, even though they could save considerable money by leaving the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

church. So there is an enormous potential there that could find a new and strong cultural expression.

RJN: You say the Second Vatican Council raised high expectations that were then disappointed . . .

WP: The Council was a disappointment in that it was not followed by decisive steps toward overcoming Christian disunity.

RJN: And one reason for that is that many saw the Council primarily as a program for changes within the Roman Catholic Church itself.

WP: Yes, and some of those changes produced problems that have distracted the Catholic Church from the mandate of ecumenism and from the questions posed by the cultural situation of Christianity in Europe. The present pope has taken up the cultural question in promising ways. But Catholic leadership does not appear to be unified at this point. It is not clear that the approach that is needed can be provided from Rome in a way that would include Protestantism and modernity. There is a great fear of losing Roman Catholic identity, and that fear gets in the way of facing up to the ecumenical and cultural challenges.

RJN: Why is it that the churches in the Reformation tradition, especially in Germany, seem to have so little interest in the cultural tasks?

WP: Historically, up to the first part of this century, the Protestant churches were intensely involved in the development of modern culture, especially in the nineteenth century. The Protestants of that time viewed the Catholic Church as a relic from the middle ages, while Protestantism was the modern form of Christianity. But then, in this century, influential figures, Karl Barth in particular, began to argue that the marriage between Christianity and culture had produced a decisive loss in the substance of Christian faith.

RJN: You would not deny that there was considerable merit in that argument.

WP: Oh yes, a degree of merit. But in many ways the protest was exaggerated, and after the terrible experience of the Nazi period the very influential school of Barth and his followers tended toward an extreme separation of the Protestant churches from the tasks of culture and modern history.

RJN: Surely that was understandable, however. Barth and others associated with the Barmen Declaration [1934] had the example of the *Deutsche Christen* who embraced National Socialism as the wave of the future and deluded themselves into thinking that they were going to Christianize the social order. The experience of the Third Reich gave powerful credibility to the Barthian critique, suggesting that Christianity must be clearly distanced from culture.

WP: Well, that is how the Barthians tell the story, and it is still a very influential story. But I am persuaded it is quite wrong to say that the *Deutsche Christen* were the logical outcome of the history of modern Protestantism. It would be more accurate to see the German Christians as another form of revolt against modernity. It was a romantic reaction to modernity, and that was also its affinity with the Nazis.

RJN: As you say, however, the Barthian critique was and is powerful. It was similar in some ways to the "neo-orthodoxy" associated with Reinhold Niebuhr in this country. You recall how his brother, Richard, described liberal or "modern" Christianity: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." That was also Barth's complaint against the "culture Protestantism" he found in Europe. You think that this is a caricature of the Reformation churches of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, that they were really not as doctrinally eviscerated as Barth claimed?

WP: That is right, but at the same time one must understand why Barth reacted as he did. That reaction was most closely connected with the experience of the First World War. That conflict shattered so many liberal and optimistic readings of history. That was one reason for the reaction of Barth's dialectical theology against the experience of modernity, and especially for its strong impact. But great figures such as Ritschl [Albrecht, d. 1889] and Troeltsch [Ernst, d. 1923] were not so naive or theologically shallow as they have sometimes been depicted. Yet the influence of Barth, even among those who do not call themselves Barthians, continues strong, and makes it difficult for the Protestant churches to address what you call the culture-forming tasks.

RJN: In the reconstruction of Protestant churches after the last war, there were serious efforts—the Evangelical Academies, for example.

WP: Yes, but you see that the Evangelical Academy effort was based on the assumption that the church is something quite different from the culture. That is the context within which the academy was to create conversation between church leaders and the leaderships in other sectors of society. It was no longer the case, as it once was the case, that the church considered itself to be a formative force within the culture itself. At the same time, we witnessed after the last war the rise of Christian parties, with particular strength in Italy and Germany and, more recently, in Spain. These Christian Democratic parties, however, have been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based on a Catholic outlook. One would have hoped that they might be based on a kind of lay ecumenism, but, for the most part, that didn't happen. The result is that Protestants, especially in Germany, are skeptical or even hostile to the institutionalizing of Christian identity in these political parties.

RJN: We have been talking about Protestants and Catholics, but of course there is another community of great importance. Jews here in the United States are typically worried about any talk about Christian society. As one rabbi told me, "When I hear the term Christian America, I see barbed wire." With tragic obviousness, after the Holocaust the Jewish community in Europe is not what it was, but what do you say to Jews who believe there are dreadful dangers—specifically dangers of anti-Semitism—in the very idea of Christian culture?

WP: It is not only the Holocaust. It is the memory of the medieval situation of Jews in Christian Europe. But a restoration of the medieval situation is neither desirable nor possible. To be sure, some people, usually Roman Catholic, may dream of such a restoration, but it is not going to happen. Any serious talk about Christianity and culture must include the Reformation and, through the Reformation, the whole history of modernity.

RJN: It is not mainly the medieval situation that Jews have in mind when they talk about the dangers of Christian Europe. They have in mind this century and the Holocaust.

WP: Christianity was not responsible for the Holocaust. The Nazi ideology was not a child of Christian theology, although there were those who twisted Christian teaching in anti-Semitic directions. National Socialism was explicitly and powerfully anti-Christian. So it is not only Jews who were persecuted, but also those Christians who uncompromisingly affirmed their faith. That being said, it must be emphasized that Jews were attacked on a much, much larger scale, and were attacked simply for being Jews. So there is no equivalence of scale and rationale between Jewish and Christian suffering. And, while Christianity was not responsible for the Holocaust, there is no doubt that most Christians, and especially Christian leaders, failed to make the witness that was morally required during that period of horror.

RJN: Some of us argue that the long-term security of Jewish-Christian relations must be religiously and theologically grounded. Here in America, where there is a very substantial Jewish community, we have had the chance over the last forty years, and especially the last twenty-five, to develop a dialogue of considerable diversity and, in many cases, real depth. How would you evaluate the Jewish-Christian dialogue in Europe, notably in Germany?

WP: By reason of the tragic history we have discussed, there are in Germany very few Jewish partners for dialogue. And I must frankly say that some Jewish figures in the European dialogue are viewed by other Jews in the world as unrepresentative of Judaism. I have been very much involved in this dialogue, and have come to recognize that this is a problem. Another problem is the way that guilt feelings get in the way of candor. Some in our churches and the theological academy tend to over-compensate by acceding to Jewish claims in an easy and facile way. Although it is not intended, there is a Christian condescension here that makes real dialogue difficult. The challenge is to affirm the Christian position, also where it differs from Judaism, but to do so in a way that does not tend toward the Christian intolerance of earlier times.

RJN: An authentic dialogue, then, requires participants who are real partners. It cannot be simply a ritual conversation between victims and victimizers.

WP: Yes, exactly right. We have come to an ecumenical understanding that, in intra-Christian relations, there can be room for differences. This should yield a new attitude toward interreligious relations as well, especially in dialogue with Judaism. Of great importance here is the eschatological belief shared by Christians and Jews who understand that incommensurate truth claims will ultimately be resolved only in the Messianic Age or, as we Christians say, the Kingdom of God.

RJN: The question of religion and European culture has to be affected greatly by the Revolution of 1989. Here we think of the former East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Baltics, and, of course, the future of Orthodoxy in Russia and other parts of what is now the Soviet Union. Some say that Central and Eastern Europe will play a critical cultural role also in the West. The assumption is that, perhaps because of persecution, there is a more vibrant Christian faith and life in the East. Although former Communist societies are economically and politically in crisis, it is said that this is the cultural gift that they bring to the West.

WP: I have mixed feelings about that. As a description of the situation right now, there is much truth in what you say. But one must be realistic. To the degree that Eastern Europeans gain access to the commodities of the West, they will experience the secularizing impact of our lifestyle.

RJN: Are you saying that the primary source of secularization is to be found in capitalist prosperity?

WP: No, not the primary source, but an important

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

element. In the East, recent Christian history has developed in a way very different from the West. The basis of cultural reconstruction is the situation resulting from the churches' opposition to the former Communist regimes. In some cases, the church provided the only space for such opposition. That was clearest in Poland, and less so in Czechoslovakia where the church was much more suppressed than could be done in Poland. In East Germany, the Protestant church played a similar role of opposition, while in other places Protestants were gravely compromised by cooperation with the regimes. It is no brilliant new insight to say that Christianity thrives in periods of persecution. As affluence and comfort replace persecution, Christians are more profoundly tempted. But certainly we should be heartened that it seems Christianity has done much better than merely survive, also in Russia itself. This fact is the clearest, and perhaps most important, falsification of Communist ideology.

RJN: Nonetheless, if we think of Western culture as a sick patient, you do not think the patient should be expecting a spiritual blood transfusion from the East?

WP: Our expectations should be modest. Nobody knows what will come out of the history of the churches' part in overthrowing those tyrannies. Many secularized thinkers in the West may be moved to become more critically reflective about their assumption that religion, and Christianity in particular, is an outdated option. So these are encouraging things. But they do not add up to the prospect of a Christian renascence coming out of the Revolution of 1989. I expect we will see important changes in the relationship between Orthodoxy and the West. Especially the Russian Orthodox have participated sufficiently in the ecumenical movement that they will resist the temptation to seclude themselves against western Christianity. At least I hope that is the case. Otherwise, we could see a resurgence of Russian and, more generally, Slavic nationalism against the rest of Europe. It is also true that many Orthodox leaders, like many Protestants, are compromised and discredited by their support for the former regimes. I must acknowledge that, when you look at the years of Communist oppression, it is the Roman Catholic Church that has come out of this time of testing with the record that is the least compromised.

RJN: East Germany, at least historically, was overwhelmingly Lutheran. Two questions: First, how do you evaluate the theological situation in what was East Germany as compared with Lutherans and Reformed in West Germany? Second, how do you explain the 1990 election in which the Protestants of East Germany voted so strongly for the conservative alliance supported by the Catholic-based Christian Democrats?

WP: During the Communist period, actual participation in church life by East Germans was reduced to about a fifth of the population. The support for the church now is much higher than that. That is because the church provided space and asylum, as we discussed, and also because its opposition to the socialist regime succeeded. I do not want to sound cynical, but people like success. As for supporting Christian Democrats, many say that it was simply a matter of East Germans voting for the mark. Also, of course, they supported the party that promised the easiest and quickest transition to a unified Germany and a free market society. But I think the deepest reason why people supported the Christian Democrats is that they favored the party that was farthest away from any connection with socialist ideology. Their experience of Communism turned them against socialism of any kind. Some intellectuals in the West protest that way of connecting the two, but in the East the mental connection between Communism and socialist ideology has been forged by hard experience.

RJN: And the theological situation in East Germany?

WP: For the most part, theology there has been shaped by the influence of West German theologians. I do not think you can say that there is a really independent theological development in East Germany. Even much of the church's stance of opposition to the former regime was informed by a style of "prophetic engagement" that came from the West. Now, as you know, there are many pastors holding public office, and it will be interesting to see whether this is only temporary or whether there will develop ideas about the church's ongoing responsibility for the political order.

RJN: Looking at the broader scene, one can imagine, say, thirty years from now a dramatically changed world. This means a more Christianly self-conscious West, including a secured connection between Christians and Jews. Suppose also that there is religious revival in Russia, and Christianity continues to grow rapidly in Africa and parts of Asia. By contrast, there would be a growing and growingly militant Islam, along with the more passive religions of Asia. Is this a hopeful picture of the future?

WP: I certainly would consider it hopeful. But we cannot dismiss other possibilities, some of which may be more probable. European unity may not proceed as fast as some think. In that case, I can foresee dangerously unstable situations coming out of conflicts over the national boundaries set after the last war. Here, I know, many people worry about a reunited Germany, and we Germans have to understand that worry. But others must understand that the best way to deal with that worry is to support the development toward European unity. The goal must be to make national boundaries less and less important. Without

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some kind of federal form of European political unity, there is very likely to be conflict, for instance, between Germany and Poland over national boundaries. The churches can contribute very importantly to such political unity by strengthening the sense of cultural unity. That means reminding the nations of Europe of their Christian heritage, which is one of the few things they have in common.

RJN: Let me raise again this prospect of a world thirty years from now. There is Christian Europe, the Christian Americas, Christian Africa, largely Christian Asia, with the only culturally and politically assertive alternative being Islam. The world, all of a sudden it seems, is defined in religio-cultural terms rather than in the geopolitical and ideological East-West terms of the last half century. Is that a desirable prospect?

WP: In some ways, yes. It is a possibility that would help us overcome the legitimacy problems of western societies in their presently secularized state. I mean the experience of meaningless and all that results from that—the disintegration of a sense of cultural unity and moral worth. One must hope, however, that the prospect you envisage would preserve the cultural pluralism that enriches the human situation and is required for human freedom. So it is an attractive prospect. At the same time, maybe the forces of secularization cannot be overcome. Then too, we have to consider the possibility of confrontation with other religions. For example, in parts of Europe—in England, France, and also Germany—we have now Islamic voices calling for an Islamic "mission" to Western Europe. They claim that Christianity is finished as a cultural force because it has failed in resisting secularism. Now, they say, is the time for Islam to take over from a failed Christianity. I think this is a very serious challenge. The number of Moslems thinking and speaking this way may now seem negligible, but it is a growing phenomenon, and it is almost certainly a sign of things to come, both in Europe and on the larger world scene. Christians, and those who understand the Christian factor in western culture, are barely beginning to be aware of the challenge.

RJN: This would appear to raise the prospect of religious warfare in the twenty-first century.

WP: Religious warfare is now inconceivable. My understanding of Christianity is thoroughly ecumenical, and it makes it imperative that, when we speak of Christian culture, it clearly means Christian and Jewish. Theologically and culturally, our relationship with Islam is different from that which we have with Judaism. That difference will not disappear. A restored Jewish-Christian understanding of our culture must, however, include the idea of toleration. So, in the situation I am discussing, there would be a secure place for Moslems and people of other religions in Europe and America. Facing Islam on the world scene poses other problems. On human and religious rights, for example, we should challenge the Islamic nations. The West should forcefully point out the way we protect Moslem religious rights in our society, while they deny the rights of Christians and Jews where Islam is in power. I think it would be good for us and for them if we were more assertive about such matters.

RJN: The sobering possibility is that Islam simply has no internal resources for legitimating the idea of toleration. Father John Courtney Murray wrote that it seems that pluralism is written into the script of history. It is hard to imagine a Moslem Murray. Christians and Jews, at least some of them, have a theologically informed understanding of history that convinces them that pluralism is not a problem to be eliminated. I do not mean, of course, the false pluralism of religious indifference, but a pluralism of mutual respect, engagement, and, where necessary, contestation. It is only through a long and painful history that Christians and Jews have come to recognize why such pluralism is religiously required. Put in another way, cultural identity is shared history, a common story line. The story line of what is called the Christian West has included, however ambiguously, Judaism, while it has not included Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu cultural systems. Of these, only Islam understands itself to be on the religio-cultural offensive, even though much of the offense no doubt disguises a deep defensiveness about having been left out of the main story line of world history. I take it that the main story line of world history to date is aptly summarized in the phrase, the rise of the West.

WP: It may be that the world you describe is coming to be. If by the West we mean Europe and those who embrace and extend the legacy of Europe, it would seem that the rise continues. Here and in Europe there is much talk about the challenge of Japan, and no doubt there is an economic challenge. But that would seem to be largely irrelevant to our discussion, for there is no foreseeable cultural challenge from Japan. So it may well be that, thirty or fifty years from now, there will be a West more self-consciously affirming its religious basis. That may be more likely if there is serious religious and cultural challenge from elsewhere—from Islam, for instance. Then, yes, the world might be redefined along religious and cultural lines, rather than the lines of ideology and geopolitics. If this is going to be a hopeful development, however, it requires Christian unity, a secure relationship between Christians and Jews, and a sense of religious urgency about preserving and extending the positive aspects of modernity. Given these conditions, there would certainly be reason to welcome such a changed world situation.

I must emphasize, however, that I do not have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stake in such a development as a Christian theologian, or as a representative of the Christian church. The Christian church does not need such a development. Our societies need it. And, even if all this developed in the hopeful manner that we have been entertaining, it would inevitably create new problems, perhaps even problems more severe than we have known in the past. Problems, unintended consequences, hopes disappointed, new hopes raised—all these are parts of the much bigger story line of human history short of the Kingdom of God. FT

RECOLLECTION OF LIGHT

Sitting at her brother's drawing board,
pale wood, color of her skin,
she said she was drawing . . . conclusions.
The way she said it she knew they would laugh,
and they picked her up for ice cream.

Later she remembered that,
and later, after forgetting it,
she remembered again.
There was something about the room that day
she remembered:

the dining room,
how it was full of people,
although the people were in the living room,
and there were only three,
he and their father and mother.

Full of people,
and often later the world had been empty,
though full of people as an airplane,
a fat jumbo jet bound for Las Vegas.
It must have been full of something else,

the dining room that day,
the unweighty obligation
to protect one another,
also love and humor,
and, over all, the bright, silent chandelier.

Charles Vandersee

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Radical Paradigm and the New Racism

David Horowitz

In confronting the race question in America today, we are faced with a paradox. On the one hand, our generation has lived through a political and cultural revolution that has no parallel. Discriminatory laws enforcing racial segregation have been declared unconstitutional and abolished, while the dream of Martin Luther King (that every individual be judged by the content of his character and not the color of his skin) has been integrated into the American dream itself in a way that only Lincoln's Gettysburg image (a government of, by, and for the people) had been previously. At the same time, the accession of black Americans to full citizenship rights has been truly dramatic. Black Americans have become the mayors, police chiefs, and public officials of the very citadels of what was once the segregationist south. Nor is it only in the south that such victories have been won, for black Americans have been elected mayors of the great metropolitan centers of New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Los Angeles as well, and have become an integral part of the nation's political life.

And not only its political life. Thus, we have recently entrusted our national security to a black American general, first as the president's national security advisor and now as the head of our armed forces. In 1984, our country was symbolically represented at the Los Angeles Olympics by a black athlete who was chosen to light the ceremonial torch opening the games. Our highest literary honor last year went to a black woman, and for nearly a decade the most watched model family on television has also been black. Year in, year out, moreover, the popular heroes of our culture—athletes, musicians, entertainers, and film stars, the aristocracy of talent adored, emulated, and worshipped as only royalties were in the past—are now significantly black as well. It would seem that the integration of black America into the national mainstream is well along the path to completion.

Yet much of our political and social reality seems to contradict the promise of these changes. In fact, a significant chorus of civil rights leaders claims that we have made no real progress, that racism is as pervasive and the goal of equality as remote as ever. And racial consciousness, generally, *is* higher than at any time within recent memory. The founder of the National Association for the Advancement of White People is one of the leading candidates for Senator from Louisiana; in major cities like Chicago and New York, black Americans vote in blocs of 90 and 95 percent for black candidates; racial crimes are common and racial tensions rife in places—for example, liberal college campuses—where they were once virtually nonexistent. Moreover, conspiracy theories—themselves symptomatic of social disintegration and incipient fascism—have exfoliated at both ends of the political spectrum, gaining credence among wide sectors of the population.

At the root of this paradoxical state of affairs lies a new racism, differing from the old in its origins and dynamics. The old racism may have served economic and social interests, but its sources were instinctive and visceral. The new racism is political. It has sprung up and spread like a poisonous weed to choke the civility that the civil rights movement had established. It has given the old racism a new lease on life.

David Horowitz *is Co-Director of the Second Thoughts Project of the National Forum Foundation and co-author, with Peter Collier, of* Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the old racism did not die with civil rights, just as the old Adam doesn't disappear with civilization. It was driven underground. Civilized order is constituted by the moralities, institutions, and traditions that tame the savage in us and restrain our impulse to evil, that humanize our behavior and elevate our souls. That is the significance of the laws that were instituted by the civil rights revolution, that made our standards color-blind and universal, and that completed our constitutional covenant; they called us to our better selves.

But it was never in their capacity to remake us, to extirpate the reflexes of fear and resentment of the other that achieve their repulsive apotheosis in racism, and that are inscribed in our characters like a genetic code. That is why we have placed our hopes in laws, standards, and moralities that are universal, that are meant to be applied to our citizens regardless of race, gender, and creed. That is the importance of the civil rights revolution, and why defending its principles, which are now under siege, is more urgent than ever.

It is urgent because of the breach that has been made in this covenant in the last two decades by the radical forces of the political left. Radicals are the permanently unsatisfied among us—nihilists of the utopian vision, restless with the imperfections of humanity as we know it—who clamor for a future in which human beings will be different from what they are and the world transformed, for a world in which racism and evils like it will be purged from the species forever, and of course for the time when radicals like themselves will inherit the earth. This is the messianic maximalism that has blighted our century, the gnostic idealism that subverts its own ends and leads instead to the gas chambers and the gulag. And it is this political religion—preached by left-wing ideologues on our campuses and by demagogues in the streets—that is the primary source of the new racism.

An emblem of this pathology can be found in one of the recurring symptoms of the present crisis. A racial crime is committed, but the forces of the law are blocked in their efforts to secure justice by radical attorneys representing the victims. These attorneys refuse to allow their clients to cooperate in the prosecution of the crime, claiming justice will not be done, indeed *cannot* be done, because the system in its very nature is unjust. Thus the crime becomes the occasion for an indictment not of the deranged individuals who may actually have committed it, but of America itself.

We have heard this indictment before. It is the prosecutorial brief of the political left (and indeed the chief prosecutors of the present racial confrontation, Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox, were actually trained in the William Kuntsler school of guerrilla law). The radical paradigm that informs the new racism is a melodrama of social domination and political liberation: domination by an oppressing class, liberation through civil conflict.

For old-style liberals, politics is the art of compromise; for radicals it is the conduct of war by other means. The radicals' war begins by dividing society into the politically chosen and the morally condemned, and ends with the total annihilation of the social enemy, which will usher in a millennium of social peace. In proposing a strategy of total victory, radicalism becomes a species of racism. The will to genocide may begin as metaphor, as when Marxists call for the elimination of exploiting capital; but its momentum is towards genocide in fact, as in the Leninists' program to exterminate the bourgeoisie as a class. In their political practices, Communism and Fascism historically are kissing cousins: the stigmatization of entire social groups is combined with the will to suppress them permanently in the name of a better world.

Marxism long appeared to be free from racist taint because the messianic force on which it pinned its hopes was not an ethnic or racial sub-group, but a universalist *class*. Because it was universal, the proletariat in representing its own interest represented the interests of all. But by 1960 the myth of the proletariat was itself universally dead. This recognition was one of the factors that gave birth to the New Left.

It also removed, however, the last barrier to the racism inherent in the politics of the left. For the New Left and its successors, the agency of revolutionary change was no longer the proletariat, no longer a class. Instead, race, gender, and even sexual orientation became substitutes for the missing messianic agent. Thus when the guerrillas of the New Left marched off the streets and into the universities at the end of the sixties, they did not create "proletarian studies" programs, but fortresses of ethnic and gender politics. These new "disciplines" provided academic fiefdoms for anti-Semitic and anti-white racists like Professor Leonard Jeffries of CUNY, who teaches undergraduates the moral superiority of the "sun people" because of the higher melanin content in their skin, and Leroi Jones, a/k/a Imiri Baraka, now Professor Baraka and head of Afro-American Studies at SUNY-Stony Brook. "We want poems like fists beating niggers out of Jocks of dagger poems in the slimy bellies of the owner-jews/Look at the Liberal Spokesman for the jews clutch his throat and puke himself into eternity/ Another bad poem cracking steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth," wrote Baraka as a sixties icon. This seed has now sprouted in the hateful lyrics of rap group Public Enemy and in the proto-Nazi speeches of Louis Farrakhan.

While the soldiers of the radicals' class conflict changed from proletarians to people of color and victims of gender bias, the structure of the radical paradigm was maintained: the division of society into the "people" and those identified as the "enemies of the people," into "us" and "them"—the prescription for cultural and political war.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is the emergence of this left, beginning with the black power activists led by Stokely Carmichael, that derailed the integration process and the authentic civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King—a movement which had fought for the idea of a single standard: one justice, indivisible, for all. The result was predictable from the contrasting agendas of the leaders of the two movements. A believer in American democracy, King had embraced the historic alliance between blacks and Jews, America's other outcast minority; Carmichael hated America and American democracy, hated Jews and hated whites, and expelled them from the civil rights coalition. Carmichael and his cohorts replaced the liberal goals of racial integration and equal opportunity that King had championed with the leftist model of oppression and liberation. The goal of integration—the classic route to success in America—was condemned as a path to moral corruption and political co-optation; the strategies of non-violence and compromise were rejected in favor of the politics of confrontation and threat; the encompassing metaphor for the civil rights struggle became one of civil war.

When the political confrontation failed to generate a social revolution, Carmichael deserted his constituents and went into exile as a prince across the water in the Marxist totalitarian state of Guinea. In his adopted homeland, the atrocities committed against the impoverished population were acceptable to Carmichael because the dictator was a friend, a socialist and black. Recently, however, Carmichael has returned to spread his message of anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and race hatred on campuses across the United States, where he is welcomed by the New Left professoriate and its student disciples.

For two decades, activists like Carmichael, street prophets like Farrakhan, and academic mountebanks like Baraka and the egregious Angela Davis have been stars of the campus circuit, indoctrinating new generations in the divisive and racially polarizing ideologies of the radical paradigm, and in the denigration of American values and institutions. They have been supported by a chorus of white radical academics and accommodating administrators who find their rantings congenial to the alienated world-view they can pick up in the pages of *The Nation*, *Z*, *Mother Jones*, and *In These Times*, or on the airwaves of Pacifica and National Public Radio. Without the presence of this left, the ugliness of the old racism would no doubt still be with us, but we would be much farther along the road in our attempts to repress and contain it.

It is this left that has promulgated the idea that there is no common cultural heritage that belongs to all Americans, that the culture out of which this democracy was conceived is really the culture of a master race, that the American consensus is oppressive in its very nature, in the same way that American justice is oppressive, that American institutions are inherently racist and need to be radically reformed.

The appeal to social theory and philosophical principle is the high road taken by New Left academics and legal activists in their assault on the universal covenants that have, until now, made this democratic Republic the wonder and envy of the world. But there is a low road, as well, on which racist demagogues have followed after them, inspired by their indictments and encouraged by their attacks. From Susan Sontag's infamous remark of the sixties that "the white race is the cancer of history" to Elijah Muhammad's revelation that whites are devils invented by a mad scientist named Yakub is no great leap after all.

The largest and most powerful racist organization in the United States today is the Nation of Islam, a pseudo-religious political cult born in the same malevolent crucible as the sixties' left. A split-off from the Black Muslims, the Nation of Islam has preserved the political thrust of that amalgam, at the expense of its religion. For the Nation of Islam—as for the liberation theologians—the political is religious. Thus, the Nation of Islam regards white America and the Jews as great Satans, and accuses them of conspiring to commit genocide against blacks through the epidemics of drugs and AIDS. In a recent speech in Los Angeles, broadcast as a public service by Pacifica's KPFK, Farrakhan lieutenant Steve Cokely even identified the local measles epidemic as part of this genocidal plot, whose ultimate architects were those familiar demons of the paranoid right and left, the members of the Trilateral Commission and other ruling-class cabals. In his diatribe, Cokely invoked a radical canard that has been showcased for national audiences in celebrated cultural artifacts like Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*. Cokely claimed that white America was killing black Americans with impunity. The problem with black people, he complained, was that "we don't deliver retribution," which could also be a subtext of Spike Lee's film. At a recent public gathering in the heart of the nation's capital, with former civil rights hero and disgraced Mayor Marion Barry on the podium as an object lesson, Farrakhan prepared his black audience for the coming race war. Invoking the "persecution" of American blacks over the centuries, of which Barry was allegedly the most recent example, Farrakhan ranted: "All white America could be asked to die to equal the score."

And this is heart of the problem. Racist hatemongers like Farrakhan and Cokely and their genocidal messages, far from being stigmatized and isolated on the political fringe, have—through the intervention of the political left, the tolerance of the civil rights establishment, and the acquiescence of the liberal center—become part of the culture itself. The claim that there is a governmental/white conspiracy against blacks in America has been a weapon in the rhetorical arsenal of the left for two decades. It is as readily found in the editorials of the *Nation* (which have routinely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claimed that the war on drugs is a war on black America), as in the public utterances of literary icons like Toni Morrison, who told *Time* magazine that the only thing binding America together as a nation is its racism toward American blacks.

To embrace the general idea of genocidal conspiracy obviously makes it easier to accept the particular paranoias spread by demagogues like Farrakhan about drugs or AIDS. These grotesque libels have been propounded as well by tenured radicals as though they were facts, and disseminated in "news" stories without editorial comment by left-wing journalists like Earl Caldwell of the *New York Daily News*. Even as responsible a black columnist as William Raspberry of the *Washington Post* has defended Farrakhan on the spurious grounds that he had some true things to say (as though Hitler did not). Nor has the outcry against these genocidal libels been all that deafening. Jesse Jackson, while still the leading Democratic politician in Chicago, chose to be silent during the public storm that broke after it was revealed that Cokely—then a high-salaried aide to the Democratic mayor—had accused Jewish doctors of injecting blacks with AIDS. Widely regarded as a moral leader, Jackson can condemn the President of the United States as a racist, while refusing to make similar judgments of Cokely, the Nation of Islam, or Farrakhan, his continuing friend and political ally.

Silences like Jackson's are made easy and thus virtually inevitable by the liberal center's collusive tolerance of the new racism. This tolerance ranges from allowing political demagogues like Jackson to posture as moral spokesmen while maintaining their ties to bigots like Farrakhan to portraying those bigots as social critics. Thus a *New York Times* story described Washington Mayor Barry's alliance with Farrakhan in the following terms: "[Barry] has shown up at rallies with the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam leader who has gained nationwide attention for his criticism of white society, particularly Jews."

Mayor Barry's alliance with Farrakhan was but the latest episode in the series of Reichstag fire incidents that began with the fraudulent claims of Tawana Brawley and have escalated since, in which the normal processes of the judicial system are converted by left-wing racists and black "nationalists" into their standard morality play about oppressive Amerikkka ruled by white devils and in need of liberation. The success of this morality play is such that the truly genocidal libel that whites and Jews are plotting the destruction of black Americans is now given wide credence in black communities across the country (as reported in a recent *Washington Post* survey), in the way similar conspiracy libels against the CIA and other government agencies have become staples of belief in the communities of the left. The conquest of the political culture of the black community by the culture of the left has allowed someone like Farrakhan to gain an acceptance and support that far exceeds that of any comparable black demagogue in the past including Malcolm X, who in his lifetime, it should be remembered, was condemned and isolated by the leadership of the black civil rights movement precisely because of his rhetorical violence and racial politics.

The liberal center is now so permeated by the culture of the left that institutions like the *Times* and the *Washington Post* (which recently presented Farrakhan's views in a lengthy and respectful format suited to a world-important statesman) are unable to recognize such enemies of liberal society for what they are. As a result, the editors of the *Times* and *Post* legitimize by default "community leaders" whose civic agenda is to provoke a race war. Of course, this liberal myopia applies only to hatemongers in one direction. Grand Dragons of the Ku Klux Klan, or neo-Nazis with parallel ideas, can expect no such treatment, partly because they have far smaller followings, but partly as well because they are white.

The double standard has led to other ugly consequences: the legitimization of white racist rhetoric in the advocacy of reverse affirmative action among ordinary Americans who don't necessarily read the *Times*, and the re-emergence of white racism as a political program in the candidacy of former klansman David Duke. In a political crucible in which preferential treatment and race-based laws are advocated by the liberal establishment, a National Association for the Advancement of White People can look like an equal opportunity party. In fact, this revitalization of the old racism is integral to the agenda of the left, because it is the key to its favored strategy, which is to eliminate the moderate center. Thus, in the early seventies, Angela Davis formed a Communist Party front called the Alliance Against Racism whose main target was the Ku Klux Klan, at the time a thoroughly discredited, closely monitored, and generally moribund institution. Shortly afterwards, a mini-sect calling itself the Communist Workers Party announced a "Death to the Klan" rally in Greensboro, North Carolina, provoking a gun battle in which five of their own members were killed. At the time, the Klan was hardly important. But it was vital to the political strategy of leftists like Angela Davis and the Communist Workers Party that the Klan *be* important.

Historically, the way to every leftist political victory has been paved by the elimination of the political middle. Only when the left can present itself as the lone alternative to a fascist right has victory been within its grasp. In the last two decades, the left has greatly eroded the liberal center on the issue of race. In the process, it has relentlessly assaulted and nearly subverted the democratic ethos—the idea of universal standards, of equal opportunity, and of competitive justice. The task before us is to rebuild that center by reaffirming universal standards, by condemning and isolating racist hatemongers, and by rejecting the radical paradigm of liberation and oppression—of politics as a means of civil war. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1789: A Requiem

John P. Sisk

Perhaps no English poem was more frequently cited during France's 1989 Bicentennial year than William Wordsworth's *Prelude*, in Book XI of which one finds "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very Heaven!" Anyone unfamiliar with the poet's biography might reasonably have assumed that the poem was a euphoric celebration of the Revolution, something like an anticipation in blank verse of "Prairie Fire," the 1974 "Political Statement of the Weather Underground," the passionate aim of which was "to expose and focus attention against the power and institutions which most cruelly oppress, exploit, and delude the people."

Indeed, there was early on a Wordsworth whom the blissfully if somewhat explosively alive Weathermen might have interpreted as one of their own: the man who while visiting France in the early 1790s was not only against the Old Regime but repeated the Revolution on a sexual level by taking a mistress and fathering an illegitimate child; the man who, safely back in England in 1793, wrote but was not able to publish his "Letter to the Bishop of Landaff," an attack on the British political and cultural establishment that was every bit as radical as Shelley's poem "Queen Mab." This man, having partaken of what Edmund Burke had called the intoxicating bowl of revolutionary ideas, believed that "Government was at best but a necessary evil" and upbraided the good Bishop for failing to see that the French Revolution was "a convulsion from which is to spring a fairer order of things." Indeed, he came pretty close to agreeing with Oscar Wilde's much later remark in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" that "all authority is quite degrading."

Of course those who have read *The Prelude*, especially the last five books, know another Wordsworth: one who, after a period of storm and stress that followed his growing disillusion with the Revolution as it turned tyrannous and bloody, now sees the connection between that earlier bliss and his passionate oversimplifications. He has grown conservatively away from his "juvenile errors" and thinks better of Burke. In fact, to some readers (anticipations of Tom Hayden!) he will in time become the "Lost Leader" who in Browning's poem is represented as having sold out to the establishment "for a handful of silver" — specifically, the salary he earned as Stamp Collector for Westmoreland. Stephen Gill in his recent *Wordsworth: A Life* calls Browning's remarks "a gross libel," but the poem also expresses a political naiveté (Browning, who never had Wordsworth's money problems, was about as political as James Joyce) that Wordsworth had already movingly confessed to in his own life. The confession is a major reason why *The Prelude* was not likely to give comfort to future revolutionaries—and why at the same time it could have been so instructively read or reread during the Bicentennial year.

In *The Prelude* we find what since the French Revolution has been that most quintessential of modern experiences: the painful discovery that blissful expectations of an order in which liberty, equality, and fraternity will prevail have been misplaced. There is a recognition of the centrality of this experience in the number of writers who recently have taken the Revolution as their subject, and who on the whole agree with Wordsworth, to say nothing of Burke. As Harvard professor James Wilkinson puts it in "After the Revolution in France" (*Salmagundi*, Fall 1989), "There is a distinct irony in the fact that the two hundredth anniversary of the French revolution is being celebrated at a time when the prestige of revolutions has reached a low ebb." Wilkinson is concerned primarily with the ultimate failure of the rhetoric of revolution, the simplistic moral absolutes of which by the mid-1970s could no longer be accepted

JOHN P. SISK *is Arnold Professor of the Humanities emeritus at Gonzaga University and the author of* Person and Institution.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as absolutes, so that "the ambiguities of revolutionary discourse began to collapse of their own weight." It was Wordsworth's fate, of course, to suffer through the failure of such a rhetoric, which had supported "the hopes of men/ Who were content to barter short-lived pangs/ For a paradise of ages."

David Gress in "Demystifying the French Revolution" (*Commentary*, July 1989) complements Wilkinson. Having contemplated the degeneration of Enlightenment liberal ideals to "the justification of mass murder and repression in the name of the People and *virtu*," he concludes that "nothing is easier than perverting an ideal into the tool of repressive power while retaining the original slogans." In the same vein, Mark Lilla in "The French Revolution is Dead" (*Partisan Review*, Spring 1989) tells us that Francois Furet's revisionist history of the Revolution and its aftermath "has made all French intellectuals in this history-drunk land confront their own troubled liberal tradition." He reminds us also (what some visiting American graduate students find it hard to believe) "that what is now called *la pensée '68* lost its allure some time ago in Paris."

As if to reinforce Lilla, the next issue of *Partisan Review* published "The Philosophies of '68" by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut. They speak of the eclipse of the most extreme antihumanist strains in the "School of '68" and of those philosophers, especially Marx, now losing favor in France, whose radicalism was seen not so long ago as a continuation of the Revolution. And then there is the discouraging spectacle of socialism on the retreat—indeed, in varying stages of utter collapse—everywhere. Not that the men of 1789 were aiming at a socialist order, but their dream of a totally reconstructed society has continued to inspire dreamers of other persuasions so that the revisionist spirit threatens them all. Wordsworth was not the first or last to believe "that a benignant spirit was abroad/ Which might not be withstood." To serve that benignant spirit was, and in some quarters still is, to be blissfully alive, but what if in action that spirit turns out to be malignant, so that, as Thomas Carlyle put it in his history of the Revolution, even its victims could march to their deaths shouting "Live the Republic!" as if "under a horrid enchantment"?

The disenchanted Wordsworth would later remember the "Domestic carnage" that took "Head after head, and never heads enough" and the "clumsy desperation" of those who "brought/ A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else/ Could cleanse the Augean stable." It is unlikely that he would have had much sympathy for Jules Michelet's history of the Revolution, had he lived long enough to read it. For Michelet, as Gress puts it, "the revolutionaries were always right, whatever their actions, because they were defending the cause of universal freedom and justice, which only evil or ill-informed people could oppose."

However we may sympathize with Wordsworth now we have to give Michelet his due. He anticipates Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Castro, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, and the Weather Underground in his implicit agreement with Lenin that a true revolution is inevitably violent, and that those who believe that Marx and Engels thought otherwise deserve to be scorned. The rivers of blood are not only the effects of an authentic revolution but the signs of its authenticity. The absolute rhetoric mandates the absolutely cleansing bloodbath. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* the conspirators have the right formula. After they have assassinated Caesar, Brutus directs them "to bathe our hands in Caesar's blood" so that, waving their bloodsmeared swords, they can walk ritualistically to the marketplace crying "Peace, freedom, and liberty."

It is worth noting, however, that as Nietzsche reads the play in *The Gay Science* the blood does not authenticate the strike against political tyranny but Brutus' spiritual strength by virtue of which he is able, in the interest of his self-enhancement, to cut the enthralling bond of friendship with Caesar. Such a highly personalized kind of *agape* makes one wonder how often purportedly liberating bloodbaths must be understood less as efforts to elevate the downtrodden than to elevate the inciters. Perhaps this has something to do with an all too common spectacle: a revolutionary elite living like privileged aristocrats (perhaps behind guarded enclosures) while the "liberated" but tightly controlled masses do the best they can with a scarcity of potatoes, toilet paper, cigarettes, vodka, and adequate housing.

In any event, it is what Carlyle called "the all-healing Guillotine" that, as much as any other factor, still encourages many of us to take the Revolution at its own evaluation. Who can withstand the rhetoric of so much blood? In America there has always been a tendency to think of our own Revolution as second rate because of a deficiency in the bloodletting—a deficiency that might have had something to do with the relative scarcity of rhetoricians like Samuel Adams and Thomas Paine. In the meantime we must take our authentication where we can find it, perhaps in a remark like Jefferson's to Madison: "I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical." Even a little rebellion would yield the blood without which the tree of liberty withers for lack of nourishment. So it is not hard now to imagine the potentially demoralizing position of those who are being asked to give up their vision of a blood-nurtured French Revolution. It's like asking them to believe that what Hegel called "a magnificent sunrise" was only a false dawn.

Wilkinson points out that just as in the late nineteenth century "one could aspire to be 'good' without being 'godly,' so in the late twentieth century it has become possible for the French (and other Europeans) to pursue moral ends without having to endorse

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revolutionary means." It is the theocratic combination of the good with the godly that gives us the absolutist rhetoric that mandates the nutrifying bloodbath. There were plenty of godly and rhetorically absolute people in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s who, like the Weather Underground, acted as if they took their marching orders from the Devil in one of his most effective disguises: the perfectionist who identifies as morally intolerable any flinching from the imperative to pursue a chosen objective only in the most absolute terms.

But all the Americas, North, Central, and South, have had or still have their share of revolutionists whose rhetoric expresses the conviction that without a passionate union of goodness and godliness no magnificent sunrise is to be expected. In the Fall 1986 *Hudson Review* George Watson could dwell at length on the significance of the fact that in Europe and America socialism is no longer an option, but at the same time in *The World Marxist Review* the Mexican bishop Sergio Montez Arceo was taking the position that "to be an anti-Communist means to be anti-Christian" and that all along "Christians and Marxists have been acting on absolutely equal terms within the Sandinista National Liberation Front." Meanwhile in Peru the Maoist Shining Path has found ways to adapt the purifying spirit of the guillotine to the exigencies of guerrilla warfare, and in Colombia the drug lords, having become experts in cocaine politics, are doing their violent best to market a product designed to eliminate any anxiety generated by the disjunction of the good and the godly and to leave unalloyed bliss in its place. Nor should we forget the narcotic effect that updated versions of Marxism, especially when fortified by blood-validating revolutions in Third World countries, continue to exercise on the part of the American left that is unable to see its earlier godliness as juvenile error.

But people do grow weary of the Perfectionist Devil and the godly intransigence he inspires. Mark Lilla's remark that today "naiveté is the only remaining capital offense in France" suggests that for a significant number of French intellectuals the revolution has been reduced to the level of juvenile error. This may seem like a strange state of affairs given the extent to which since the onset of modernism French intellectual life has come on like something born and bred in post-World War II California. If Lilla is right, these latter-day Thermidoreans were as authentic a part of the Bicentennial as memories of The Terror. Perhaps, having been forced to bear the symbolic burden of the revolution well past the point of demystification, they were in a mood to sympathize with what Wordsworth says in his 1805 "Ode to Duty"—"Me this uncharted freedom tires;/ I feel the weight of chance desires . . ."

But the question remains: what kind of life is there for progressive-minded people if they have no chance to be as blissfully alive as they might have been in the Revolution's passionate unity of the good and the godly? Must they cease agonizing over a proper answer to Lenin's question: What is to be done? Must they learn to be content with doing their pittance of good hoping that the godliness will take care of itself, meanwhile heroically enduring the pangs of conscience inflicted by the Perfectionist Devil, who reserves a special hatred for those willing to settle for the merely doable? Must they be willing to settle for less blissful levels of godliness, hoping that these do not prove to be ersatz?

Jane Fonda looks just as blissfully alive in the photos that decorate her very successful exercise books as she did in that famous picture of her posed beside a North Vietnamese antiaircraft gun. But even those who are still angry with the latter picture can sense that it is a sad comedown. It is as if the idealistic young Josef Goebbels, who after his first meeting with Hitler wrote in his diary "I am in heaven," survived the war to become a successful and contented advertising executive. Somewhere in the gap between the two Fonda pictures lies the explanation of why a Marxist like the Chilean Sergio Vuskovich Rojo, writing in the October 1989 *World Marxist Review*, can do what progressives of all persuasions have been doing routinely all these years: extol the spirit of the French Revolution without saying a word about the bloodshed. Only the loss of his naiveté would make the blood a subject of critical attention.

The revolution, as Gress and others agree, may have been in many ways a disaster for France, but it left us with dramatic proof that the human need to experience a blissful and synergistic conjunction of the good and the godly ranks with the fear of boredom as a shaper of history. But what if in the Hegelian longterm view Francis Fukuyama is right and we arrive at the end of history to find that without the conflicts and tensions of ideology and nationalism there can be no such conjunction and life is a bore? Indeed, revolutions become so bloody because their agents, tantalized by the vision of an ideal order, assume that the experience of it in fact will be equal to the experience of it in pursuit. It is this expected equation that makes a Robespierre or a St. Just (or any romantic lover, for that matter) so blissfully alive. But in Fukuyama's view the spirit of the French Revolution has been permanently exorcized, and whatever anachronistic absolutists remain can only expect endless repetitions of the fate of Flaubert's Emma Bovary or Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby. Fukuyama himself seems to be less than happy with this prospect. Thus he ends his essay with the not especially Hegelian suggestion that the "very prospect of centuries of boredom will serve to get history started again."

The implication here is that boredom has a dependence on absence of violence, and that, conversely, the presence of violence has something to do with being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alive, blissfully or otherwise, in the ongoing world of history. In its 1986 convention the American Anthropological Association took no account of this dependence in its "Statement on Violence." "Except for rare pathologies," the Statement says, "the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence." Since violence "is neither in our revolutionary legacy nor in our genes . . . we conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in the International Year of Peace and in the years to come." Indeed, for the anthropologists violence is no more a scientifically verifiable factor in human behavior than competition is for some of Fukuyama's "neo-realist" adversaries—although Fukuyama would probably see the connections among violence, competition, and boredom that the anthropologists miss.

Rutgers professor Robin Fox clearly sees those connections as he dissents from the "Statement on Violence" in the 1989 September-October *Encounter*. To him it isn't pessimism that threatens peace, nor is it aggression, which "is not a basic motivation for action; it is a tool for other more frightening motives." One of the worst of these is fanaticism, an example of which he finds in the Statement itself with its absolute certainty about "what is or is not 'scientifically correct.' " Professor Fox admits that he is less frightened by aggressive instincts, which he thinks he can understand and handle, "than by the prospect of being at the mercy of human intelligience and culture, given its record." In fact, he sounds a bit like Wordsworth in his disillusionment with William Godwin and all "speculative schemes—/ That promised to abstract the hopes of Man/ Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth/ Forever in a purer element." But as he rejects the simplistic absolutes of the Statement Fox sounds a bit like Wilkinson too, for he is rejecting a revolutionary rhetoric fired by a utopian expectation of a world from which violence—being a product of nurture, not nature—is permanently absent so that liberty, equality, and fraternity can prevail.

It might appear then that the anthropologists are offering progressives an opportunity for a blissful participation in the revolutionary project to shape a New Man in a New World. And this time perhaps they can focus attention on Hegel's sunrise metaphor and Trotsky's optimistic prediction in *Literature and Revolution* that under socialism we may all attain the level of a Beethoven or a Goethe. Unfortunately, this not only contradicts Lenin's dogma that a true revolution must be violent, but it will offend those who are being asked to believe that something crucial to their experience of the French and all "true" revolutions, the validating bloodbath, is unnatural. They will be in the position of football fans asked to believe that their game will be more enjoyable once the violence has been subtracted from it. Delacroix's painting "Liberty Leading the People" (inspired by the Revolution of 1830) says something important about revolution that the anthropologists ignore or have forgotten: that if it has its way it will be violent and bloody and blissful or it will be false and not worth the effort. And nobody in the Delacroix painting, certainly not the barebreasted Goddess of Liberty, appears to be bored. Even the dead people suggest in that context that they have been caught up in an enterprise so absolutely good and godly that no one would dare to accuse them of naiveté.

In American universities at the present time the conflict between Old Regime diehards and Jacobin liberators is being repeated as champions of the traditional humanistic canon defend themselves against what the philosopher Richard Rorty has called "the rainbow coalition of the American cultural left." James F. Peterman and D. E. Richardson make it clear in "A Rally for the American Left" (*Sewanee Review*, Fall 1989) how heated the rhetoric of the conflict was at the conference at which Rorty made his remark. One of the memorable presentations was made by Richard A. Lanham, appropriately a specialist in rhetoric. His paper "took the form of an encomium on the computer, which he announced will soon abolish the distinction between high culture and mass culture and will democratize art by making everyone who can operate a computer into an artist and critic."

One may imagine that in this utopianly leveled condition there would be no conflict between the good and the godly, and no outside position from which anyone could be found guilty of naiveté. But one may be struck too with the hint of a revolutionary totality in Lanham's visionary program. It takes us back to Robespierre's expectation of a totally reconstructed Republic of Virtue in which Old Regime hierarchy will be replaced by New Order equality, but this time bloodlessly. Student manifestoes in the 1960s ("The Port Huron Statement" in America or "The Nanterre Manifesto" in France) had this all-or-nothing quality. The latter, for instance, saw that it was pointless to try to improve the University of Nanterre when "the whole of society has not been reconstructed." Lanham's computer holds out the promise of such a reconstructing—one perhaps in which Trotsky's dream of everyman a Beethoven or Goethe will be realized at last, though by means Trotsky could hardly have anticipated.

Whether computer rhetoric would be what Wordsworth called "the language really used by men" as distinguished from "the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers" is another matter. Certainly the language of *The Prelude* suggests otherwise. Besides, Wordsworth's expectations of technology were anything but utopian. Science, he writes in Book II, "appears but what in truth she is, /Not as our glory and our absolute boast, /But as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a succedaneum and a prop /To our infirmity." To him Lanham's computer would probably have been nothing more than one of those crowd-bedazzling monstrosities that in Book VII make that ancient English festival, Bartholomew Fair, an image of "blank confusion." We might imagine him being less impressed with the magic of the computer than with the naiveté of assuming that its software would be produced by omniscient and benevolent agents.

Perhaps Wordsworth would have judged Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* a novelistic repetition of the phantasmagoric spirit of that Fair. However, in Mark Edmundson's "Prophet of a New Postmodernism" (*Harper's*, December 1989) Rushdie's novel becomes a proper handbook for anyone anxious to escape both the wearisome negativity of postmodernism and the stale metaphors of the traditional humanistic canon. Rushdie not only finds the "prolific variety of contemporary culture exhilarating" but through his devotion "simultaneously to demystification and to renewal" he points the way to a positive and romantic postmodernism that can "contribute to a world literature and world culture." Being antagonistic to European xenophobia, he champions a confluence of cultures and, one might surmise, an ongoing campaign of constructive canon-bashing.

Rushdie Man, with the image of a super-godly and guillotine-threatening ayatollah ever before him, continues the postmodern tradition of debunking established values. He knows that "everything's in motion, up for grabs," but his aim is always to keep the story of his life open so that renewing transformations are always possible. Indeed, he comes on much like his late countryman, that iconoclastic and cosmopolitan liberator from all Old Regimes, the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Rushdie Man may look with suspicion on Lanham's computer (too much impersonal machinery there); he cannot come to the end of history because he will be making history up as he goes along; he has no problem with the conflict of the good and godly (he will suspect all godly rhetoric as a self-diminishing trap); and he is never bored. It is conventional postmodernism that has become a bore, and Professor Edmundson is very good on this subject.

Here indeed is a revitalizing program for any progressive who has been driven into the ranks of the disenchanted postmodernists by the bad press the French Revolution has been getting. But the program is not all that new. Edmundson even takes it back to Emerson, though we had better forget the latter's "New England Reformers" essay, which might suggest that Rushdie Man is dangerously without irony and perhaps a candidate for exhibition in Bartholomew Fair after all. But more immediately, he is an updating of Robert J. Lifton's Protean Man of the late 1960s.

In an age of change and flux when the traditional ways of being godly and good had lost their authority, the lifestyle of Protean Man was "characterized by an indeterminate series of experiments and explorations—some shallow, some profound—each of which may be readily abandoned in favor of still new psychological quests." Because for him everything was up for grabs, he was wary of all those commitments associated with the traditional man of character (and celebrated in the traditional humanistic canon) that threatened to foreclose on his potential and impoverish his autobiography. Like Sartre he could say, indeed had to say, "I have no superego"—the superego being designed (as Nietzsche knew) to deny the Beethoven or Goethe potential in each of us, and being therefore a notorious impoverisher of autobiographies. He too abhorred the xenophobia of Western culture, especially as it loomed as a factor in the Vietnam War. He could understand what Jane Fonda was doing beside that North Vietnam antiaircraft gun: she was dramatizing in the face of a life-denying Old Regime an act of self-transformation. And of course Protean Man was badly equipped to see that such a blissfully self-transforming act might be serving the interests of a Regime committed to making all such ungodly transformations impossible.

Rushdie Man, like Protean Man before him, may give comfort to those who need to believe that literal or symbolic strikes against an Old Regime or a xenophobic academic canon are still possible. But Rushdie Man seems to be as cripplingly suspicious as Protean Man that behind every capital "T" truth is an ayatollah in disguise. Besides, he will be overreceptive to the Perfectionist Devil's dogma that the apparent human need of the synergistic consequences of community is nothing more than an absolute threat to the absolute good of his autonomy. Under these circumstances narcissism however defined becomes an attractive means of blissful survival in the interest of continuing self-transformations—and those who remember the sixties and seventies may also remember what ramshackle autobiographies such self-centered questers could produce. It's not easy to imagine Rushdie Man having the capacity for self-abnegation necessary to band together with other Rushdies in the pursuit of continuing renewal in a diversitarian world that is likely to contain some more-or-less violent anti-Rushdies.

The more likely thing, to judge the history that is not yet ended, is that he will be appropriated by some enchanting ayatollah who, in the act of making him question his values and then filling the resulting vacuum of his life with new meaning, will blind Rushdie Man to the distinction between the bliss of self-transformation and the bliss of total self-abnegation—and there will be no xenophobic canon on which he can take a self-protective stand. Perhaps his best hope is that, like the Bagwan Rajneesh, particular cultures will value him as a diversion from the doldrums of the commonplace, as visitors to Wordsworth's Bartholomew Fair value "The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charismatic leaders always have the effect of bringing history to an end—old history, that is, with its stale metaphors. Hegel, whom the late Eric Voegelin called a sorcerer, apparently has had this effect on Fukuyama. Perhaps human beings cannot live if they have to give up all hope of such an epochal turning, either here or in the hereafter. So a quarter of a century ago history-weary people were finding intimations of such a turning in the fortune-cookie banalities of Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*, the rhetoric of Port Huron or the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, and the promise of renewal through violence as they found it in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. But the old history keeps reminding us that the enchantments of the new-order historians can be, as Carlyle saw them, so horrid that the enchanted ones will go blissfully to the all-healing guillotine. Hitler's historical promise of the thousand-year Reich was no less enchanting and no less conducive to blissful self-abnegation, even for tough-minded intellectuals like Martin Heidegger.

In Hitler's transformed history, that thousand years was a synonym for forever, just as big numbers are for romantic lovers. Thus the lover in Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" asserts that if envious old time did not stand in the way he would be happy to spend thirty thousand years praising his loved one's charms, which is of course a way of talking about the history-annihilating function of true love. Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's novel is in this tradition when he rejects Nick Carraway's reminder that Gatsby cannot repeat his past blissful experience with Daisy Buchanan. To Gatsby that experience, not having been time-bound to begin with, cannot be "past"; it stands for the possibility of a transformed life beyond the end of history in a symbiosis of the good and the godly.

Gatsby never sounds more American than he does at his moment, when at a level of erotic entrancement he repeats our initial national and somewhat bloody act of self-transformation as we cast off an Old Regime and as many of its political and social canons as we could manage to do without. Ever since, canon-bashing has been as American as cherry pie, and it should be no surprise now to see it happening on a curricular level in American universities. Nor should it be surprising that to French intellectuals, who have become disenchanted with their own Revolution and its many reenactments, we often appear trapped in our old naivetés. The late Sidney Hook complained about the unhistorical order and content of Stanford's new Western Culture curriculum. Perhaps the Frenchmen would see that complaint in a slightly different context, realizing in their French way that canon-bashing is at bottom a kind of love affair to which the terms of the old history do not apply.

Recalling a similar time, Wordsworth speaks of "Tempting region *that*/ For zeal to enter and refresh herself, / Where passions had the privilege to work,/ And never hear the sound of their own names." We are understandably inclined to take comfort from those people, French or not, who have had enough of such zealously transmogrified passion, who have disjoined doing good from revolutionary godliness and have made a capital offense out of naiveté. In this soberer mood they are willing to settle for a future that emphasizes a more humane control of those forces which, if allowed to go their way, enlist the cooperation of ayatollah and guillotine. Perhaps there was a comforting sign of this new spirit in the fact that during the Bicentennial, not far from the Paris Opera, you could for a few francs buy a toy replica of a guillotine. Imagine being able to buy a cuddly Ayatollah Khomeini doll in an Iranian bazaar.

Nevertheless, under present circumstances this fear of naiveté can make one uneasy, especially if one takes this term, as the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur does, in the context of the hermeneutic of suspicion that has dominated our century. The three masters of the school of suspicion are Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud. In *Freud and Philosophy* Ricoeur identifies their common intention as "the decision to look upon the whole of consciousness as 'false' consciousness." In the perspective of this hermeneutic it is definitely an advantage to be born without a superego like Sartre, to be blessed with the heroic determination to violate one's dearest convictions like Nietzsche's Brutus, or to possess the means of exposing the power-lusting ideology that for Professor Lanham supports the distinction between high and mass culture.

Unfortunately, the masters of the school of suspicion, who like all masters aspire to establish themselves beyond suspicion, provide their students with the means of hoisting them with their own petards. If, for instance, they have taught their students to be less concerned with what an adversary says than with his genealogy (where he is coming from), then in the very process of using all their entrancing rhetoric they may tempt the students to wonder where the masters are coming from. So that enchanting modern game of demystification—one of the most available substitutes for religious conversion—arrives in its later innings at the demystification of the demystifiers.

But Ricoeur's delineation of the hermeneutic of suspicion is preliminary to the completion of the hermeneutic circle and the achievement of a second naiveté, which is not "the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith." Here the hermeneutic maxim is "Believe in order to understand, understand in order to believe."

This second naiveté is an intellectually toughened coming home to Being that will stand firm against the assaults of the school of suspicion. Thanks to the legerdemain of the Perfectionist Devil, however, the second naiveté can be made to appear identical with the first naiveté of the simple soul, with the result

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that naiveté of whatever sort, being a liability in the ongoing war with all entrancers, becomes a capital offense. So too the understandable desire to survive becomes a crippling fear of the second naiveté (to Rushdie Man or Niezsche Man it rules out the self-transformations that matter most), and a crippling inability to see that the effort to be civilized depends on the effort to keep the good and the godly in a workable conjunction.

When the Abbé Sieyès—author of the important Revolutionary pamphlet "What is the Third Estate?"—was asked he had done during The Terror, he replied that he had survived. One of Ricoeur's implications is that survival, like irony, is not enough, may be only a holding action against that dreaded time when the familiar discomforts of Professor Edmundson's negative postmodernism become absolutely intolerable. Apparently it was not enough for Sieyès. Once the terrorists had proven to be non-survivors he helped Napoleon to power, so that before the latter too became one more non-survivor it was possible for Hegel to believe that Napoleon was the spirit of the French Revolution raised to the eminence of "World Soul."

Wordsworth too survived and so missed the fate of becoming "a poor mistaken and bewildered offering" to the Revolution. But he was not spared the ensuing "perturbations of a youthful mind" that preceded what we may now call his second naiveté. This, as he tells us in a great passage in Book XII, came by way of rediscovering the "hiding places of man's power," those "spots of time" rooted in past naive experience that retain "a renovating virtue" the issue of which is clearest vision and "profoundest knowledge." The value he continued to find in simple souls, which can be embarrassing now to those who read him through the filter of the hermeneutic of suspicion, had the humanistic consequence of enabling him to find "Once more in Man an object of delight."

Wordsworth at his poetic best never lost his sense of the vital connection between his first and second naiveté. Nor did he lose his Burkean sense of the interdependence of past and present, the loss of which, he had come to see, had made him blissfully amenable to "the hopes of men/ Who were content to barter shortlived pangs/ For paradise of ages." And having seen this, the French Revolution for him was dead. FT

ON WHOLENESS

Lying
when

you know
you're lying,

like stuffing
from a cushion,

integrity
gone

makes
a
sad hole.

Camille S. Williams

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Telling the American Catholic Story

George Weigel

Catholics in America have rarely taken the study of their history seriously. My own educational circumstances, which were hardly unique, may illustrate the point. In nineteen years (1956-75) of a generally excellent Catholic education in church-sponsored schools and seminaries, I never once was offered a formal course in the history of Catholicism in the United States. And while this educational gap was perhaps understandable in a church dominated until the very recent past by immigrants and their children, it is nonetheless a formidable problem today, for, in Cicero's words, "Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child."

Happily, there are signs as we enter the 1990s that this self-inflicted amnesia is ending. American Catholic history may not be so booming a discipline as biblical studies or medical ethics, but even the most cursory survey of the *American Catholic Studies Newsletter* (published by the Cushwa Center for the study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, itself an institutional expression of the growth of the field) reveals an extraordinary breadth of research, ranging from classic institutional histories and biographies of key figures to the new social history, with its emphases on patterns of community, spirituality, family life, and education. Many Catholic dioceses are, at long last, taking their archival responsibilities seriously, and new lodes of information are being unearthed and mined. For example, the Archdiocese of Boston recently discovered and acquired twenty boxes of the personal and administrative papers of Cardinal Richard Cushing, once thought to have been destroyed at the cardinal's death in 1970.

This new vitality of interest in the American Catholic story is surely to the good. It is good for the Church (both here and in Rome), good for the study of American religion, and good for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interaction of religion and public life in the ongoing experiment of American democracy. But there are no unmixed blessings in the tides of intellectual interest and fashion, as the discovery of Clio's charism among American Catholics illustrates. For parallel to (and in some cases generating) the explosion of historical knowledge about American Catholicism has come an effort to put that knowledge—better, a distinctive interpretation of that knowledge—to various partisan purposes in today's struggles over the meaning of orthodoxy, authority, and ministry. Separating the wheat from that particular form of chaff is the business of this essay.

GEORGE WEIGEL *is President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. He is the author of* Tranquillitas Ordinis *and* Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy.

I

To say that American Catholics have rarely taken their history seriously is not to say that there have never been serious historians of American Catholicism. Although they are largely unknown outside the American Catholic community (and scarcely better known inside it, for that matter), John Gilmary Shea, Peter Guilday, Thomas T. McAvoy, and, preeminently, John Tracy Ellis were old-fashioned historians of genuine accomplishment who, in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, created the classic story line of American Catholicism.

It was a story written under the long shadow of nativist (and, it must be said, largely Protestant) anti-"Romanism" and its recurring charge that Catholicism—as a body of doctrine, a matter of personal conviction, and an institution—was incompatible with American democratic republicanism. Msgr. Ellis has frequently quoted the remark made to him by Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., that Schlesinger considered "the prejudice against your Church as the deepest bias in the history of the American people." There is ample evidence even today to suggest, without

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

getting into a bigotry sweepstakes, that Professor Schlesinger's indictment was not a reckless one.

Classic American Catholic historians, as eager to challenge the nativist canard as other pre-conciliar Catholic intellectuals, adopted the "Catholicism/Americanism" tension as the principal theme of their story line. They sought to show how the Catholic people, and particularly their episcopal leaders, had worked tirelessly to demonstrate in practice what they affirmed in principle: that there was no inherent conflict in being both a convinced Catholic and a patriotic American. Thus historical classicists like Shea, Guilday, McAvoy, and Ellis tended to highlight those great accomplishments of the Church in the United States—the assimilation of some ten million immigrants between the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the massive institution-building which paralleled the assimilation—that graphically and empirically refuted the spirit (and the letter) of Know-Nothingism. The brick-and-mortar church of the urban neighborhoods thus became the main character in the American Catholic story.

Given their (wholly justifiable) concerns over problems of religious intolerance, the classic historians of American Catholicism, after a few ritual nods toward the Church of the Spanish and French explorers, liked to begin The Story of American Catholicism in 1634, with the founding of the proprietary colony of Maryland as, *inter alia*, a refuge for Catholics from Stuart England. These historians paid particular attention to the Maryland Act of Religious Toleration of 1649, which provided that no Christian in the province would "bee any wais troubled, molested, or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof," nor could any person be in "any way compelled to the beleife or exercise of any Religion against his or her consent."

The story was then fast-forwarded to the time of the American Revolution. The thirty-five thousand Catholics in the thirteen colonies were less than one percent of the national population. But they were nonetheless blessed by great leaders, most prominent among them the Carroll cousins, Charles Carroll of Carrollton (longest surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence) and John Carroll, first archbishop of Baltimore and the first Catholic bishop in the United States. The "Carroll Church" was, in fact, the paradigm of American Catholicism most celebrated by the classic historians, and John Carroll himself was invariably presented as a model of leadership that his successors in the American episcopate would do well to emulate.

Archbishop Carroll's patriotism and his optimism about the American experiment; his ecumenism and his commitment to the constitutional separation of church and state; his active role in civic life; his passion for Catholic education; his non-sycophantic loyalty to the Holy See—these qualities of the "Maryland Tradition" were regularly celebrated in the classic historiography of American Catholicism, for it was precisely these qualities that, according to the standard account, allowed American Catholicism to weather the nativist assault and to get on with the parallel tasks of church-building and nation-building. Great episcopal figures of the antebellum period—for example, the Irish liberal John England of Charleston, and the pugnacious John Hughes of New York—were "fitted" into the Carrollingian story line (if I may be pardoned the neologism) even as their distinctive styles and the accomplishments of their episcopates stretched the boundaries of the "Carroll Church." That style of Catholicism proved its tensile strength during the national cataclysm of 1861-65. Its unity in and with Rome kept American Catholicism from fracturing during the Civil War, according to the standard account. But the Church's (primarily Irish) ethnic concerns, and its nervousness about its position in the old Confederacy and the border states, conspired to keep it from seizing the great evangelical opportunity presented by black freedmen during Reconstruction.

The classic story line accelerated, and the central drama within it intensified, in the late nineteenth century. Here, the narrative was dominated by the struggle between the "Americanist" party (Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Bishop John Keane of Catholic University, and their Roman agent, Msgr. Denis O'Connell) on the one hand, and the "conservatives" (led by Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York and his suffragan, the redoubtable Bernard McQuaid of Rochester) on the other—and it was rather clearly understood that the Americanists were the good guys in the controversy. Things were, of course, more complicated than that. Bishop McQuaid, the curmudgeonly "conservative," initially opposed the definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I. Archbishop Ireland, the quintessential "liberal," ruthlessly drove Eastern-rite Catholic emigrants and their married clergy out of the archdiocese of St. Paul and indeed out of the Church (thus earning himself the ironic title, among some wags, of "father of Russian Orthodoxy in America").

But where the two parties clearly divided was on the question of American democracy and its distinctive "answer" to the age-old problem of church and state. The Americanists supported, even celebrated, the American arrangement, while the conservatives (like most senior Roman officials of the day) found it tolerable at best. Charges of heresy flew back and forth.

Eventually, in 1899, the "Americanism" controversy was brought to a formal conclusion by Leo XIII's apostolic letter, *Testem Benevolentiae*. The letter condemned certain "Americanist" propositions (about spirituality, ecclesiology, the Church and modernity, and church/state relations); but the pope also admitted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his uncertainty that anyone of consequence in the American Church held to the proscribed notions. In the ensuing hermeneutic battle, Gibbons and his party argued that "Americanism" was a "phantom heresy" (a position adopted by the classic historians of American Catholicism), while Corrigan and his friends thanked Rome for having saved them from the clutches of irresponsible Gallican innovators and sweaty jingoists.

The Carroll/Gibbons tradition, according to the classic story line, went into a fallow period after the deaths of the giants, Ireland in 1918 and Gibbons in 1921. The end game of the Americanist struggle abutted the far more stringent Roman reaction to "Modernism" in the first and second decades of the twentieth century, and the "Maryland Tradition" of Carroll and Gibbons was superseded by the vigorous *Romanita* exemplified by Cardinal William O'Connell of Boston. But the great tradition was kept alive in the social liberalism of the "Right Reverend New Dealer," Msgr. John A. Ryan, and was revived among the bishops in the late 1940s and 1950s under the episcopal leadership of men like Detroit's Edward Mooney, Chicago's Albert Meyer, and St. Louis' Joseph Ritter. The Maryland Tradition reached a particularly sharp edge of intellectual development at the Jesuits' Woodstock College outside of Baltimore, which housed the pioneer ecumenist Gustave Weigel and the great theologian of freedom, John Courtney Murray. The Second Vatican Council endorsed this revival, and indeed the tradition of the Carroll/Gibbons Church, in its "Declaration on Religious Freedom" (of which Murray was, of course, an intellectual architect).

By the mid-1960s, then, the tension that had driven the classic story line in the history of American Catholicism seemed largely resolved. The election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency in 1960, and the Vatican Council's endorsement of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, vindicated the confidence of Catholics in America and the American experience of Catholicism. Or so it seemed, until the ecclesiastical and political controversies of the post-conciliar and Vietnam periods began to chip away at The Story of American Catholicism as told by the classicists.

II

The classic story line held in the generation of scholars immediately following Msgr. Ellis. James Hennesey, Gerald Fogarty, and Marvin O'Connell are three distinguished historians who, with differences of emphasis and nuance, have generally worked within the standard account while correcting its simplifications and amplifying its range of interests and concerns. Hennesey's 1981 volume *American Catholics* enriched the classic portrait of Catholic Americans by focusing on Catholicism as a community of distinctive human beings, and not simply as a religious institution. Fogarty's study *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965* offered a detailed portrait of the (sometimes tawdry) ecclesiastical politics that shaped the Americanist controversy, but, again, from within the general framework of the standard account with its emphasis on the "normative" status of the Carroll/Gibbons view of the American Church. In a more recent work, *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A History From the Early Republic to Vatican II*, Fogarty offers, among other things, a useful antidote to the claims of some Catholic "restorationists" that the anti-Modernist excesses of the early twentieth century were the invention of fevered post-Vatican II liberal imaginations. Fogarty's portrait of the persecution (there is no other word for it) of the Catholic University biblical scholar Henry Poels is a sobering reminder of how zeal for the Lord can, in the wrong hands, become mere zealotry. And Marvin O'Connell's recent and splendid study, *John Ireland and the American Catholic Church*, has demonstrated that biography in the grand manner and within the classic story line is still possible even as contemporary research refines the standard account and our understanding of the major figures within it.

But Fathers Hennesey, Fogarty, and O'Connell may well be a diminishing minority among current scholars of American Catholic history, for they seem to accept, with various qualifications, the Shea/Guilday/McAvoy/Ellis historiography in its general outline of The Catholic Story in America. And it is precisely that account that is now being challenged by a revisionist school whose manifesto may be taken to be Jay P. Dolan's 1983 work *The American Catholic Experience*.

The revisionists have brought new insights to the study of American Catholic history, particularly in terms of social history. Like Fernand Braudel and the *Annalistes* school in France, and in a manner not dissimilar to that of E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and other Marxist historians in Britain, the revisionists are far less inclined, as a matter of principle, to investigate the doings of bishops and clergy, and far more interested in probing the daily lives and religious practices of American Catholics. This has, as I say, enriched our understanding of the American Catholic mosaic considerably.

But the revisionists' real interest, intellectually and, so to speak, politically, is historiographic. And their strategy, as an intellectual party, includes two lines of attack: to uproot the Shea/Guilday/McAvoy/Ellis standard account, and to replace it with a telling of the tale more congenial to their own current ecclesiastical concerns, which involve the catalogue of "progressive" causes flogged weekly in the *National Catholic Reporter*—disentangling the American church from "Rome" (meaning, from the program of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger), "women's rights" in the Church, the "democratization" of Catholicism, and so forth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the classic story line stressed the essential continuity of the normative "Carroll Church" from the American Revolution to Vatican II (while taking account of the break in that trajectory occasioned by the Americanist and Modernist crises and the interwar "Romanization" of the American hierarchy), the revisionist story line stresses discontinuity: between the colonial period and the church of the Revolutionary period; between the first, "republican" years of Carroll's episcopate and his later, "conservative" period; between the Carroll Church and the "immigrant Church" that followed; between, most importantly, the working-class "Catholic ghetto Church" of 1925-55 and the post-conciliar suburban Church of the 1960s and 1970s.

There was, to be sure, something a bit too neat about the standard account and its sense of American Catholic continuity, particularly in the scholarly generations running from Shea through the early Ellis. Yet what the revisionists propose is not to refine that account but to abandon it. The story line they would substitute is one whose thematic hallmarks are discontinuity across the generations from John Carroll to Joseph Bernardin and John O'Connor; the radical pluralism of Catholic experience; the mediocrity and xenophobia of the pre-conciliar ghetto Church; and a chronic, usually nasty, tension between the Church in America and the Holy See.

This revisionist strategy involves a root-and-branch retelling of the American Catholic story from its beginnings. In terms of the colonial period, the good news is that the new historians have probed far more deeply than their predecessors into the non-English-Catholic roots of Catholicism in America, and have added to our store of knowledge about colonial French and Spanish Catholicism—the latter, of course, being of particular importance today, given the prominent (and increasing) Hispanic presence in the American Church. The bad news is that the revisionists pay little attention to the religious-liberty dimension of the Maryland founding, and undervalue its importance as a breakthrough in religious tolerance with implications for Catholic participation in the subsequent church/state debate in the independent United States.

Indeed, the revisionist rereading of the Maryland colonial experience is a striking example of the school's tendency to turn what ought to be an amplification of our understanding of the past into an assault on the truth of the classic story line. The revisionists are surely right to remind us that the Calverts, founders of Maryland, were not plaster saints, but rather investors and proprietors who expected their colony to turn a profit. But why should such commercial concerns be thought to have precluded a commitment to religious liberty? Why couldn't the early Calverts have been *both* proprietors and exponents of religious tolerance? Do we have here an instance of "progressive" American Catholicism's skepticism toward capitalism distorting its historical perspective?

But the real target of the revisionist rereading of the American Catholic "founding" is the work and reputation of Archbishop John Carroll. In the recently published six-volume Bicentennial History of the Catholic Church in the United States, James Hennesey sums up, in contemporary form and with due regard for the archbishop's flaws, the classic case for Carroll.

> His church was that which antedated in Catholicism the neo-ultramontane movement. In secular politics, he was a Federalist, a conservative, an admirer of George Washington. The "furious democracy" of France's revolution appalled him. . . . But he did not confuse [the] American and French revolutions, and he believed that the church in the United States should be open to new forms of being and functioning that responded to the new setting in which it found itself. His working out of this in practice was not always easy nor was it always successful. John Carroll's "learning and abilities" were put fully to the test. On balance he met that test. His like has scarcely been known again in the history of American Catholicism.

Jay P. Dolan, on the other hand, will have none of this. In *The American Catholic Experience*, Dolan's final judgment on John Carroll is little less than scathing, for Dolan regards Carroll as having committed a kind of treason. Carroll, who had the opportunity to lead the way, in fact betrayed the possibility of creating a distinctively "American Church" by his ultimate (and, in Dolan's view, pusillanimous) acquiescence to Roman authority.

> With the spirit of independence, so manifest in the 1780s, gone, Carroll became increasingly dependent on the Papacy. All throughout his career as a leader in the American Catholic community, he sought to maintain a balance between being a loyal American and a faithful Roman Catholic. It was a delicate balancing act; in his younger years, as a priest, he leaned toward the American spirit of independence; in his later years, as bishop, he moved closer to the stance of a Roman Catholic for whom the Papacy was the vital center of the Church. Though he still held firm to his belief that the authority of the Papacy was limited to "things purely spiritual," he no longer supported the idea of an *independent American Catholic Church* (emphasis added).

This view is, of course, dependent on Dolan's revisionist account of Carroll's early ministry as Superior of the Catholic Mission in the United States and as first bishop of Baltimore. Then, Dolan argues, Carroll understood the importance of creating a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"republican" form of Catholicism in which the Church would absorb the new national experiment in democracy into its own internal life. Lay ownership and control of church properties, the election of bishops, decentralized church authority, a vernacular liturgy, eschewal of a distinct Catholic educational system—in short, Catholic Congregationalism: this was the cause that, Dolan believes, Carroll should have espoused and would have led, had he not been spooked, as it were, by the excesses of Jacobinism in France and his own innate ecclesiastical conservatism.

Those who detect some affinity between Professor Dolan's revisionist designs for the truly "republican" episcopate of John Carroll and the agenda of certain parties *à gauche* in American Catholicism today will not be far off the mark. For just as revisionist historiographers of the Cold War reread the history of the Truman administration through the lens of their own Vietnam passions, the new American Catholic revisionists view the episcopate of John Carroll—*the* paradigm in the classic story line—through the prism of their own agenda for Catholicism in the 1990s.

Despite a flurry of "independent" thinking during the Americanist controversy, the "republican" Catholicism that Archbishop Carroll allegedly betrayed lay essentially dormant, according to the revisionist story line, until the post-conciliar period. The 165 years between Carroll's "turning" and the close of the Second Vatican Council were dominated by the construction of the "immigrant Church"—by which the revisionists mean (sometimes using the term itself, sometimes suggesting it by inference) the "ghetto Church." Moreover, "ghetto" here takes on the dreariest possible coloration: xenophobic, anti-intellectual, racist, sexist, authoritarian, Jansenist. Thomas Spalding, author of *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989*, sums up the revisionist indictment in these terms:

> In an editorial entitled "Keeping Up with the Times," the *Baltimore Catholic Review* told its readers in the summer of 1921 that the Church "sees beyond the present and prepares for other times when jazz and noise and vulgarity shall have sickened their votaries." Her attitude toward the big questions "is the same today as yesterday." As non-Catholic America entered a period of doubt and disillusionment following World War I, "Catholics set out as 'providential hosts' to defend the values and promises of American idealism which seemed threatened by various forms of irrationalism." In their keeping innocence would survive.
>
> With a self-assurance that brooked no questioning, American Catholics would convince themselves that they were in the forefront of every important social, cultural, and intellectual movement in the country. . . . Catholics would be daily reassured in the Catholic classroom, Catholic press, and Catholic pulpit that their Church had the answer to every question worth asking. Never would they think to look beyond these sources for confirmation.
>
> "We were, thus, a chosen people—though chosen, it seemed, to be second rate," recalled Garry Wills, a beneficiary of these reassurances and for several years a resident of Baltimore. The in-built inferiority of the ghetto church was carefully hidden by an apologetics ultimately rooted in neo-Thomism that would allow even literate Catholics to assume a God-given superiority. Upon this apologetical undergirding the Catholic ghetto of the twentieth century would be confidently constructed.

The classic story line, particularly in the hands of its more sophisticated practitioners, did not ignore the "immigrant Church"; indeed, it gave considerable attention to the assimilation controversies and other Irish/German tensions in the late nineteenth century. However, the classicists regarded the American Catholic immigrant saga as essentially a story of success. While the Church in Europe was losing the working class during the Industrial Revolution, American Catholicism, against the historical odds and in the face of vicious nativist opposition, brokered the passage of ten million immigrants into mainstream American society while retaining the religious loyalties of the overwhelming majority of these new citizens. Moreover, according to the standard account, that "success" was reconfirmed in the post-World War II period, when Catholicism was transformed from the working-class, urban-based Church into a middle- and upper-middle-class Church demographically centered in the suburbs.

The revisionists, on the other hand, cannot seem to bring themselves to regard what they style the "ghetto Church" as the platform for any sort of success, religious, intellectual, or political. They accept, without much cavil, one of John Tracy Ellis' more dubious claims, namely, that American Catholicism had no intellectual life to speak of in the mid-1950s. They ignore, perhaps because they hold in contempt, the political success of the urban Catholic Irish, Italians, Germans, and Poles. They have little to say, perhaps because the data ill fit their historiographic image, about the fact that American Catholicism during this "ghetto" period produced great pioneers of the liturgical and social-action movements like Virgil Michel. Nor do they account for the fact that the Thomism they dismissively deprecate (while failing to recognize the variant schools within the Thomist family) was taken seriously as an intellectual tradition by such respected secular scholars as Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mark Van Doren. Nor can they explain how converts like Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton were attracted to this Church whose public

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face is taken to have been that of a xenophobic, anti-intellectual, politically reactionary ghetto. According to Wills and Dolan, only in the 1960s, when American Catholicism, personified by Daniel and Philip Berrigan, broke definitively with the "ghetto Church" and its flag-waving patriotism, did it become possible to reclaim, again and at last, the "republican" heritage betrayed by John Carroll and (most of) his successors.

Here, yet again, the revisionists have leaped from a valid historical point to an invalid historiographical conclusion. Of course there were strains of xenophobia in the immigrant Church, and some of them perdured into the 1960s. No one who reads Cardinal Lawrence Shehan's memoirs, in which he poignantly recalls being booed by masses of Catholic parishioners in 1966 when he testified before the Baltimore City Council in favor of an open-housing ordinance, can fail to realize that there were ugly elements in urban ethnic Catholicism. But, as Thomas Spalding himself demonstrates in *The Premier See*, the "ghetto Church" that produced racist parishioners also produced the priests and laity who were at the forefront of Baltimore's integration movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Moreover, the revisionist account scarcely does justice to the immense vitality of Catholic life in, say, the Baltimore of Archbishop Michael J. Curley (1921-1947) or the Chicago of Cardinal George Mundelein (1916-1939). Spalding, in *The Premier See*, seems simultaneously baffled, charmed, repelled, and deeply impressed by Archbishop Curley and the church he led. Curley, Spalding insists, had "little use for the values of mainstream America" (what those values are is left to the reader's imagination), and deliberately eschewed the Carroll/Gibbons tradition for a church guided by "the myth of majestic changelessness." On the other hand, Spalding notes that Curley, with his "boldness and vigor," was "without doubt the most open, honest, and outspoken member of the American hierarchy" during the interwar period. What accounts for this curiously bifocal judgment? I suspect it may be due to the fact that Spalding, who has long and historic family connections in Baltimore, is somewhat less a revisionist on this matter of the "ghetto Church" than Dolan or Wills, and yet feels required to tip his historiographic hat at least modestly in that direction. Thus do intellectual fashions shape, posthumously, the reputations of great men.

III

The revisionist deprecation of John Carroll and the even more lurid revisionist portrait of the "ghetto Church" are not simply matters of intellectual fashion, however. They are interpretations deeply, even determinatively, influenced by contemporary church politics. To construct an historical foundation for the "progressive" Catholic agenda they champion today, Jay Dolan and others in the liberal Catholic opinion establishment have to make several moves. First, they must distinguish the "bad John Carroll" from the "good John Carroll." Second, they must show that the "bad Carroll" skewed the growth of American Catholicism away from its "republican" roots and towards ultramontanism. (Gibbons and Ireland must be chuckling in heaven over the thought that they were closet ultramontanes, but revisionist historiography permits few calibrations to the right of Catholic Congregationalism.) Third, they must demonstrate that the net result of Carroll's betrayal was the "Catholic Ghetto," whose evils must be catalogued in grim detail. Finally, they have to present the Second Vatican Council exclusively as the Council of *aggiornamento* ("updating"), rather than as the Council of an *aggiornamento* rooted in *ressourcement* (a "return to the sources")—including, it should be added, a return (in the Declaration on Religious Freedom) to the sources of authentic American Catholic liberalism in Carroll and Gibbons.

None of this, in its parts or as a whole, makes for an especially plausible or persuasive portrait of the American Catholic experience—unless one adopts what Frederick Crews has described as the "perpetually scandalized relation to the past" of "post-sixties conformism." And that, alas, is a tough but accurate description of those revisionist Catholic historians who are working diligently to rewrite the American Catholic story line in order to prop up the sagging cause of "progressive" Catholicism today. These new historians of American Catholicism have, let it be freely admitted, opened some important windows of understanding. And doubtless some of their post-sixties conformism is less a matter of an ideological agenda than of unexamined assumptions. But what might be called, with due respect, the "Jay Dolan Project" in American Catholic history is of a different magnitude entirely. For it is an interpretation of history intellectually rooted in what Philip Gleason has aptly described as "more fundamental changes in *theological* outlook." The Dolan Project, in other words, is much less a matter of new facts than of new interpretive filters, of "a tendency to endorse as theological liberalism what the old [historiography] endorsed as social and procedural liberalism."

The proper analogy, again, is to the revisionist school of American historiography in the 1960s. As William Appleman Williams deliberately sought to reshape and radicalize U.S. foreign policy through a revisionist (and essentially Marxist) reading of the history of America's encounter with the world, so Jay Dolan has, with energy and imagination, sought to buttress the "progressive" agenda in contemporary American Catholicism and the cause of an "independent American Catholic Church" by a radical retelling of the story. No doubt new light will be shed on the American Catholic experience as the Dolan school

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continues its work. But if the Williams analogy holds over the next decade, Professor Dolan and his colleagues may be in for an unwelcome surprise. For the net result of the revisionist/classicist battle over the origins of the Cold War was a strengthening of Harry Truman's posthumous claim to historical greatness—precisely the "myth" that the revisionists were most eager to debunk. Might the same be the happy fate of John Carroll and the Carroll Church when the debate over the Dolan Project runs its course?

IV

"History is an antidote to despair," or so thought a college teacher of mine. Perhaps he would pardon my amending his *mot* to read, "History is an antidote to frivolity."

American Catholicism suffers from an excess of frivolity in the opening years of its third century. A church that is the largest voluntary association in the country; a church whose universal pastor has, over the past decade, definitively answered Stalin's cynical query about the pope's divisions; a church that is, demographically, at its strongest historical point of leverage in American society—this is a church that would seem well positioned to seize what Richard John Neuhaus and others have seen as a possible "Catholic moment" in American history, *pro Deo et patria.*

Instead, the "Catholic moment" proposition has been subjected to the death of a thousand cuts from both opinion establishments, the liberal and the conservative, in the American Church. The left refuses to concede the possibility of a "Catholic moment" built around the postmodern ministry of Pope John Paul II. The right insists that the *real* "Catholic moment" was in the heyday of Archbishop Curley when the "myth of majestic changelessness" prevailed against all the Church's enemies, foreign and domestic.

Simply paying more attention to The Story of Catholicism in America will not solve the problem of Catholic frivolity in the 1990s. Indeed, if the revisionists come to dominate the field, their scandalized relationship to the past ("I thank thee, O God, that I am not like my ancestors: racist, sexist, warmongering, environmentally insensitive, subservient to Rome," etc., etc.) virtually guarantees more frivolity, now extended back across several generations.

On the other hand, a renewed and amplified classic story line could revivify the "Catholic moment" proposition in several ways. It could help distinguish what is authentically "American Catholic" from what is merely post-sixties conformism. It could suggest models (Carroll, Gibbons, Murray) for the interaction between the United States and Rome that mediate between Catholic Congregationalism and the tendency to see Catholicism in the United States as a mere branch office of Roman Catholic Church, Inc. It might put to rest one of the least plausible feminist claims about the pre-conciliar Church, i.e., that it was an institution in which women were "disempowered." It would, in sum, usefully complexify the current Catholic debate, and thus create the possibility of moving that debate to a more adult level of discussion.

Whom you would change, taught Martin Luther King, Jr., you must first love. Whom you would love, you must first know, because love is an act of the intellect as well as of the emotions. The new historiography of American Catholicism teaches, sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly, a contempt for the Catholic past, and indeed for the American past—which seems a dubious base on which to build the American Catholicism of the future. But neither can an American Catholicism capable of seizing a possible "Catholic moment" be built on the receding sands of a forgotten past.

Any possible "Catholic moment" in American history will combine, as did the Second Vatican Council, a strategy of *aggiornamento* with a strategy of *ressourcement.* And that, it seems, is what the Carroll Church tried to do, at least in the standard account of The Story of Catholicism in America. Amplifying and refining that classic story line is thus an important intellectual exercise for the Church today. And it just might be, as well, both an antidote to despair and a source of good cheer about the future. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Response

A Reply to My Critics: The Evolution Debate Continued

Phillip E. Johnson

(Editors' note: The October issue of First Things *featured Phillip Johnson's essay, "Evolution as Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism," along with responses to the essay by William B. Provine, Gareth Nelson, Irving Kristol, Thomas H. Jukes, and Matthew Berke. Herewith Professor Johnson's reply.)*

Readers of my article and the responses may have noticed that where I attacked Darwinism and the establishment of naturalism, Thomas Jukes and William Provine responded with a spirited defence of *evolution*. The choice of words is important, because "evolution" is a vague term with immense power to confuse.

The important claim of "evolution" is that life developed gradually from nonliving matter to its present state of diverse complexity through purposeless natural mechanisms that are known to science. Evolution in this sense is a grand metaphysical system that contradicts any meaningful notion of creation, because it leaves the Creator with nothing to do. Contemporary neo-Darwinism rules out theistic or "guided" evolution just as firmly as it rejects direct creation *ex nihilo*.

It is this universal, naturalistic version of evolution that Darwinists are preaching (the word is appropriate) in the schools and colleges, with more or less clarity depending on the circumstances. As Provine rightly says, liberal theologians and Darwinists share a common interest in obscuring the anti-theistic implications of Darwinism. The vagueness of "evolution" permits Darwinists to hold open the possibility of a theistic interpretation for a time, and then to slam that door shut when it is safe to do so.

"Evolution" also designates some relatively modest modifications in biological populations that result from environmental pressures. Bacterial populations *evolve* resistance to antibiotics: *evolution* causes dark moths to preponderate over light moths when the background trees are darkened by smoke. These examples have nothing to do with whatever creative process formed bacteria and insects in the first place, but since the same word is used to designate both limited adaptive modification with fixed boundaries and the whole naturalistic metaphysical system, it is easy to give the impression that naturalistic evolution (all the way from microorganism to man) is a "fact."

I am glad to see Jukes stating explicitly that the peppered-moth case is *not* an example of evolution, because that example has been cited in texts and popular treatments for decades as proof of "Darwin's theory." Currently, the Darwinists are trumpeting some research on guppies as providing the elusive proof. The breeding practices of guppy populations vary according to the kind of predators they face. When predators attack adults guppies tend to produce more offspring earlier in life, and when predators attack primarily juveniles the adults tend to bear their offspring later in life.

Variability like this does not show guppies on the way towards turning into something else. On the contrary, it shows flexibility within limits. Like peppered moths, guppies avoid extinction by retaining the genetic capacity for back-and-forth modification as circumstances change. Nonetheless, reports of the guppy observations are being presented to the public

Phillip E. Johnson *is Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of a forthcoming book on Darwinism.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as proof of "evolution." The misunderstanding is not the fault of journalists, but of a science that is working too hard to support a creaky paradigm.

Once they exist, populations of organisms can change within limits. Hence "evolution" produces offshore species that closely resemble mainland species, and so on. These modifications are an interesting subject in themselves, but what we really want to know is how complex organisms and major groups like animals came to exist in the first place. Capacities like photosynthesis, vision, and intelligence involve immensely complex processes that are still only dimly understood. Are these capacities the work of a Designer, or were they produced by mindless, purposeless natural forces?

Ask that question and you will get heavy-handed ridicule from the likes of Jukes and Provine. People who resort to ridicule are often covering up something. In this case they are hoping to prevent reasoned examination of a vulnerable assumption. The assumption is that science knows of a mechanism for evolution (grand system) that can produce eyes, brains, and even plant cells without the application of massive amounts of preexisting intelligence.

If you assume *a priori* that science must have discovered such a mechanism then Darwinist natural selection is the winner, because nobody has another theory that meets the philosophical requirements. If you are willing to consider the possibility that something beyond what our science understands might have been at work, then you will want to ask for proof that the mutation-selection mechanism has the fantastic creative power that has been claimed for it. The proof won't be forthcoming. All you will get are arguments that one way or another assume the point in question.

It isn't merely that grand-scale Darwinism can't be confirmed. The evidence is positively against the theory. For example, if Darwinism is true then the bat, monkey, pig, seal, and whale all evolved in gradual adaptive stages from a primitive rodent-like predecessor. This hypothetical common ancestor must have been connected to its diverse descendants by long linking chains of transitional intermediates,* which in turn put out innumerable side branches. The intermediate links would have to be adaptively superior to their predecessors, and be in the process of developing the complex integrated organs required for aquatic life, flight, and so on. Fossil evidence that anything of the sort happened is thoroughly missing, and in addition it is extremely difficult to imagine how the hypothetical intermediate steps could have been adaptive.

One can't make problems of this magnitude go away simply by announcing that there must be gaps in the fossil record. According to Steven Stanley, the Bighorn Basin in Wyoming contains a continuous local record of fossil deposits for about five million years during an early period in the age of mammals. Because this record is so complete, paleontologists assumed that certain populations of the basin could be linked together to illustrate continuous evolution. What they discovered was that species that were once thought to have turned into others turn out to overlap in time with their alleged descendants, and "the fossil record does not convincingly document a single transition from one species to another." New species seem to appear from time to time, and they are more or less related to what came before, but nobody knows how it happens.

From time to time something is found that can be interpreted to support the Darwinian scenario. The importance of such a find is then exaggerated, and the mountains of negative evidence are quite unscientifically brushed aside. An example is Provine's purported "fossil ancestors of whales having small but still functioning legs."

Provine evidently has in mind the Basilosaurus fossils recently reported in *Science*. Basilosaurus is not an ancestor of modern whales. This oddity was a kind of serpentine sea monster that has important affinities with whales but looks sufficiently different that it was at first thought to be a reptile. (The name means "King Lizard.") Paleontologists report finding fossil leg and foot bones "in direct association with articulated skeletons of Basilosauras." Upon reconstruction these are deemed to show vestigial hind limbs, which were too small to be used for swimming and which could not conceivably have supported the body on land. Possibly the limbs were used as guides for copulation, but that is only a guess.

There is additional circumstantial evidence which suggests a relationship between whales and land mammals. For example, modern whales have what appear to be rod-like vestiges of pelvic bones. You can call this relationship "evolution" if you like, but all you have done is to put a label on a mystery. What Darwinists want us to believe (and want to believe themselves) is that they know how mindless natural forces could have produced all those diverse mammals from an unknown common ancestor, and ultimately from a microorganism. The problem is that their theory doesn't fit the evidence, which is why they have to protect it with bluster.

Darwinists have turned to the molecular evidence in recent years to validate "evolution." The molecular-clock hypothesis upon which Jukes relies is embroiled in complex controversy, but for present purposes a

* Like "evolution," "intermediates" is a term which can be used with different meanings. What Darwinism requires is not fossils that are in some vague sense intermediate between major groups, but fossils that can establish common ancestry and direct lines of descent from ancestor to descendant. According to University of Chicago paleontologist David M. Raup, "If Darwin were writing today, he would probably still have to cite a disturbing lack of missing links or transitional forms between the major groups of organisms." This is after 130 years of very determined efforts to confirm the theory.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

single point will suffice. Whatever else the molecular comparisons may or may not prove, they tell us nothing about how one kind of creature (e.g., a rodent) can change into another (e.g., a whale). The theory is based on the premise that molecular changes are mainly neutral, meaning that they have no substantial effect upon features important for adaptation.

The point of Darwinism is not to describe molecular relationships but to get rid of the Designer and substitute the Blind Watchmaker. As a consequence the science education organizations are engaged in a campaign of indoctrination against the concept of creation. By that I do *not* mean biblical literalism, but the much broader notion that a purposeful intelligence is responsible for our existence. I regret that Irving Kristol misunderstood me on this point. No doubt that is my fault for not avoiding the word "creation," but it is just too good a word for me to allow either the scientific naturalists or the biblical literalists to capture it for their own purposes.

The science educators are not staying away from the topic of creation, but rather are campaigning against the idea. When accused of this they prevaricate, hiding within the vagueness of terms like "evolution" and "religion." The President of the august National Academy of Sciences resorted to the following classic of Newspeak: "A great many religious leaders accept evolution on scientific grounds without relinquishing their belief in religious principles." He wouldn't have signed his name to that statement if he had expected to be questioned closely about what he meant by "evolution," "religious principles," and "scientific grounds."

Gareth Nelson refers briefly to the many points on which we agree, but then moves quickly to the safer ground of comparing today's science-education establishment favorably to the Sorbonne theologians of 1751. I concede that the Darwinists do not show heretics the implements of torture, but they do use all their institutional power to ensure that critics do not get a fair hearing. That is what Jukes and Provine have in mind when they suggest that responsible editors know better than to publish essays like mine. Darwinists also pursue a steady campaign of disinformation, slandering dissenters as "creationists" (i.e., biblical literalists) who deny "evolution" (observable adaptive modifications or relationships) because they just can't bear to face the facts.

If I could have one wish, it would be for a fair opportunity to persuade the real scientists that the Darwinists are taking advantage of them. The scientific community need not panic just because somebody wants to show that Darwinism has been grossly oversold to the public. If evolutionary biology is having trouble with its mechanism, and is in danger of having its philosophical undergarments exposed to public view, why not enjoy the spectacle?

The real danger to science is that it is being linked to a dogma that can't stand close examination in order to further an ideological agenda that goes way beyond the proper concerns of science. The worst kind of science education is the kind that tells students it is wrong to question the pronouncements of authority. The corrective doesn't require giving a place in science class to the biblical literalists. To borrow Irving Kristol's prescription, "Our goal should be to have biology and evolution taught in a way that points to what we don't know as well as what we do." I would only add that it would help if we could get the science educators to define that word "evolution" precisely and use it consistently.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books In Review

Constitutionalism and Modernity

Confronting the Constitution: The Challenge to Locke, Montesquieu, Jefferson, and the Federalists from Utilitarianism, Historicism, Marxism, Freudianism, Pragmatism, Existentialism. Edited by Allan Bloom. *AEI Press. 552 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Daniel Mahoney**

Everywhere the institutions and ethos of democratic governance appear to be on the ascendancy, but what of constitutionalism, the theory that inspired and undergirded the origin and practice of free government in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? The most dominant and fashionable currents of thought in philosophy and political theory pride themselves on their "postmodernism," on their relentless rejection of nature and reason as standards by which to judge the writings and deeds of men and societies.

The Founders of the American Republic were liberal republican constitutionalists, simultaneously aware of a certain indeterminacy in the human conception of the good and therefore refusing the imposition of intolerant religious and political orthodoxies on enlightened peoples, but wholeheartedly and reasonably committed to the dignity of political self-government and of limited government under the rule of law and a constitution which was the product of "reflection and choice." The American Founders were neither absolutists nor relativists—to refer to the vulgar dichotomy that defines moral discourse today—but men of liberality and civility who thought that a rational regime of self-governance and human liberty could be built based on reliable if indeterminate knowledge about the permanent nature and needs of human beings.

It is this confidence both in the reality of a permanent human nature and in the reasonableness of the liberal republican constitution that is challenged by the major currents of thought—from historicism to Marxism to existentialism—which to greater and lesser extents have shaped the modern academic mind, and, to a degree greater than is sometimes realized, the public mind. This new book, edited by Allan Bloom, is an attempt to investigate the reasonableness and moral and political effects of that post-liberal challenge.

Confronting the Constitution is a detailed and scholarly analysis of the dialectical encounter between the original liberal republican constitutionalism that shaped the American regime and those currents of modern and postmodern thought that challenge and deny its core presuppositions. The book is in many respects a working out of Bloom's fundamental thesis in *The Closing of the American Mind* that the reasonable and civil openness of the liberal democratic regime has been usurped by a counterfeit openness which in the name of democracy and tolerance denies the teachings about natural rights and permanent political truths that are integral to the political science of Jefferson, Adams, and the *Federalist Papers*. In Bloom's understanding, both in his earlier book and in his Introduction and his contribution on "Rousseau: The Turning Point" here, this challenge and usurpation can best be understood as a struggle between two anthropologies and two states of nature, the Lockean and Rousseauean conceptions of man and civil society. The Lockean conception of the rationality of bourgeois political economy and the representative regime of rights, the society which above all defines man as a proprietor and rights bearer, has been intellectually and spiritually challenged by a powerful and seductive philosophy which attacks the triumph and universalization of bourgeois values as the ultimate step in the diminution of human dignity.

Nietzsche's attack on the complacent and prosaic Last Man, Marx's attack on the "monadic" character of life in bourgeois society, existentialism's attack on the inauthenticity of bourgeois existence, Freudianism's rehabilitation of sensual pleasure against the despotic and restricting chains of civil society—all are in part derivative from Rousseau's powerful attack on the degrading character of Lockean liberal nature and rationality. In fact, Bloom, in his thorough and captivating account of Rousseau's teaching and its political consequences, argues that socialism, historicism, romanticism, and the cult of republican community ("communitarianism") all have their roots in a partial development or vulgarization of an aspect of Rousseau's subtle teaching. Rousseau's teaching is the true intellectual and spiritual patrimony of the late modern and postmodern minds.

To a certain extent and in his own idiosyncratic way, Bloom is captivated by the Rousseauean critique of bourgeois society. He seems largely to accept Rousseau's analysis of the flat and prosaic character produced by the liberal regime. But he refuses to reject rationalism *per se* simply because Lockean liberalism gives an incomplete and uninspiring account of human nature and its possibilities. In addition, he recognizes, against Rousseau, that capitalist political economy has on the material level largely settled the economic problem and that the prosperity and liberties of liberal society offer undoubted benefits to the many and the opportunity for religious freedom and philosophic inquiry to believers and philosophers.

On the practical level, his stance toward the liberal regime recalls

Daniel Mahoney *is Assistant Professor of Politics at Assumption College in Worcester, MA.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tocqueville and to some extent the German idealists such as Kant and Hegel. He would like to see liberal democracy morally and especially intellectually elevated, but he does not deny either its likely continued expansion or its comparative decency. Bloom admires the theorists of liberalism for their commitment to the life of reason and recognizes a theoretical and practical sobriety in the liberal project that is absent, if not in Rousseau, at least in all the derivative "Rousseauisms." Bloom respects the practical benefits of liberal democracy, but he prefers the charms of Platonic "divine madness" to liberal moderation or democracy. Bloom, then, is not a liberal, but neither is he the enemy of liberalism or democracy that his liberal critics glibly portray. Nor is he a nihilist, as certain conservatives, dogmatic partisans of natural right, too quickly proclaim.

Bloom, like Tocqueville, wants to reason about the costs and benefits of liberal democracy. He rightfully will not settle for either a poetry of natural right or a cult of democracy. He convincingly argues that this is the highest kind of patriotism that citizens can exercise in a society grounded not in myth or divine right but in the natural human capacity to reflect upon the human and political good.

BUT DOES BLOOM finally understand America? And does he share Tocqueville's judgment about the fundamental justice of a decent democracy? To the extent that he seems to identify and reduce America to the thought of Locke, Bacon, and even Montesquieu, Bloom is speaking less about America and its constitutionalism than about some currents of thought that have had, to differing degrees, real and sometimes profound influences on the American regime. But what of America, of the moral vision of the American Founders understood not as an epiphenomenal reflection of early modern philosophy but as a distinct and not wholly derivative political science and project?

Here we see a powerful and fruitful tension in these seventeen essays commissioned by Bloom. Some of them adopt Bloom's position in more or less identifying American constitutionalism with Lockean liberalism. Others, particularly three powerful essays by Thomas Pangle, David Epstein, and Harvey Mansfield, treat the Americans on their own terms as liberal republican constitutionalists.

Epstein and Mansfield are particularly convincing in showing that the standard reading of the *Federalist Papers* as presenting and defending a new political science of interests, constitutional mechanisms, and private liberty abstracts from the Federalists' efforts to sustain a regime of public liberty and self-government. Publius believed that the honorable determination of a people to govern themselves was rooted in human nature and had to be respected if a truly reasonable regime was to be established. The Founders rejected Hobbes' view that people could consent to government in one irrevocable act and instead created a regime of continuing consent and republican self-government.

Far from reducing American constitutionalism to a science of interest, these essayists in particular emphasize the importance of political liberty and even virtue for the Framers. But this was to be elicited through an education in liberty and rights ("the spirit of liberty") and through constitutional offices such as the Senate and Presidency that aim to channel democratic willfulness and whimsy into deliberative choice. The Founder's virtue was *liberal* as well as republican.

For Epstein and Mansfield, the liberal constitutional republicanism of Publius is truer to the complex nature of human beings than the contemporary social science of left and right which has no place for such categories as ambition, virtue, liberty, and reasoned choice, but instead inexorably reduces everything to the social, psychological, or economic conditions of choice while incoherently deifying democratic willfullness. Pangle, admiring the Founders, finally leans closer to Bloom's position. The republican ("liberty as end in itself") dimensions of our constitutionalism are for him finally subordinate to and eventually undermined by the acquisitive, self-interested ethos that was always the most powerful current in the decent but unsteady American synthesis.

Without pronouncing a final word on these different accounts of the spirit of Americanism, one can at least state the following: The essays on the Founders in this work get to the core questions about the meaning and animating spirit of Americanism; that is, they are an exercise in civic as well as philosophical self-consciousness.

THE ESSAYS ON the post-Founding currents of thought make up the bulk of the book. I particularly recommend a careful essay by Joseph Hamburger which delineates the powerful differences between utilitarianism (particularly in the thought of Bentham, Austin, and James Mill) and the thought of Publius and Tocqueville. The utilitarians who have had such a powerful influence on the development of the social sciences, particularly economics, derided the very notions of constitutionalism, inalienable rights, self-government, and federalism. Like Comte, the father of continental social science, they saw these as vestiges of premodern metaphysics and superstition. They were far closer to the spirit of socialism in defending the necessity of a government which engineers human happiness even at the price of human freedom. To the extent that the social sciences are imbued with their presuppositions, they indirectly undermine the civic and constitutional spirit at the foundation of limited government and political moderation.

Susan Schell provides a thoughtful essay delineating both the attractive and problematic elements in German idealism. She is particularly helpful in revealing the complex mix of liberal and illiberal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

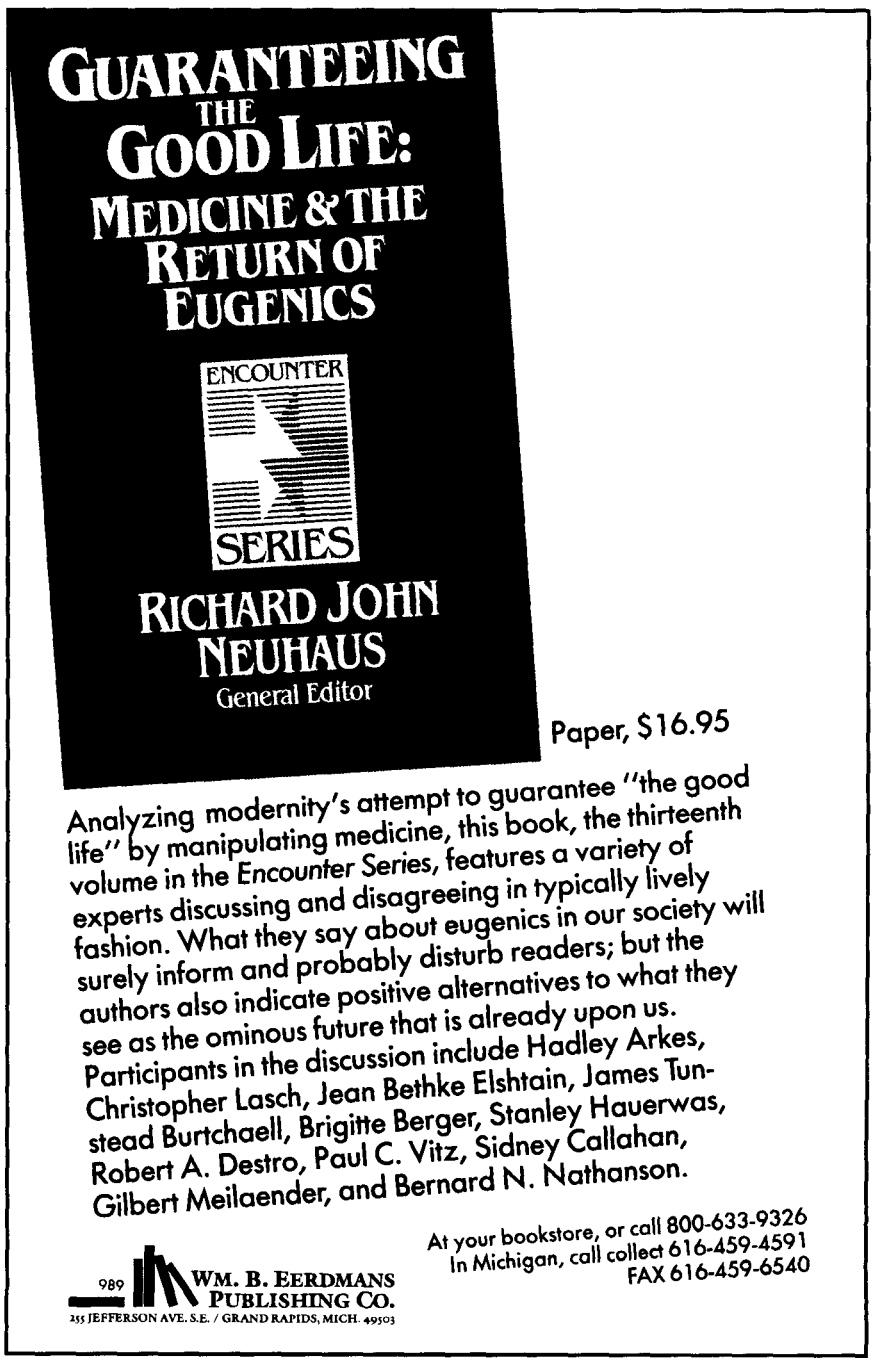
elements that fall under that category of political thought. And she succeeds in the nearly impossible task of making comprehensible the political teachings of Kant and Hegel. Their thought, instead of elevating liberalism as they intended, has been at the fountainhead of the challenge to bourgeois liberty and society. Their thought is more open to vulgarization and to misuse than the sober reason of the Founders. Schell and many of the other contributors confirm Bloom's point: "Rousseauean" modernity, despite its intentions, undermines the moderation that is the great moral strength of constitutionalism.

Other uniformly excellent and thoughtful essays deal with the relationship between liberal democracy and historicism, Marxism, pragmatism, existentialism, Freudianism, and the new neo-liberal "constitutionalism" of Rawls, Dworkin, and Nozick. All are sustained by the same fundamental insight. Liberal democracy is a decent regime, the best of the regimes available within the context of modernity. But the leading currents of thought in the "philosophic" and "academic" world today deny the rationality of liberal constitutionalism. Most go so far as to deny the existence of the theoretical life, the moral life *per se*, and therefore the possibility of political and human deliberation. They, to use the language of C. S. Lewis, attempt to abolish man. Liberal constitutionalism may be in need of serious moral and theoretical confrontation. But that cannot be done by saying adieu to reason and eliminating the very category of humanity, of human nature. It must be done on the basis of genuine dialectic, of political philosophy in the original sense.

As Bloom notes, the major political challenge to liberal democracy today, Communism, is in utter theoretical and practical shambles. Everywhere in the Communist world, people thirst for an education in the theory and practice of democracy. Those coming out from under the rubble of totalitarianism want to know the secret of democracy, they desire to learn its "political science." But what can the main currents in philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences offer those incipient liberal democrats in Tiananmen Square? Bloom writes:

> The dominant schools in American universities can tell the Chinese students only that they should avoid ethnocentrism, that rationalism has failed, that they should study non-Western cultures, and that bourgeois liberalism is the most despicable of regimes. However, that is not what they need. They have Deng Xiaoping to deconstruct their statue of liberty. We owe them something much better.

Confronting the Constitution


GUARANTEEING THE GOOD LIFE: MEDICINE & THE RETURN OF EUGENICS
ENCOUNTER SERIES
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
General Editor
Paper, $16.95
Analyzing modernity's attempt to guarantee "the good life" by manipulating medicine, this book, the thirteenth volume in the Encounter Series, features a variety of experts discussing and disagreeing in typically lively fashion. What they say about eugenics in our society will surely inform and probably disturb readers; but the authors also indicate positive alternatives to what they see as the ominous future that is already upon us. Participants in the discussion include Hadley Arkes, Christopher Lasch, Jean Bethke Elshtain, James Tunstead Burtchaell, Brigitte Berger, Stanley Hauerwas, Robert A. Destro, Paul C. Vitz, Sidney Callahan, Gilbert Meilaender, and Bernard N. Nathanson.
At your bookstore, or call 800-633-9326
In Michigan, call collect 616-459-4591
FAX 616-459-6540
989 WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49503

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goes a long way toward giving reasonable people and searching liberal democrats what "we owe them." It makes the indispensable contribution of providing not only an education in the public philosophy of liberal democracy but a charming, exciting, and disconcerting introduction to political philosophy *tout court*. Whatever reservations one may have about any particular argument or essay, this book is that rarity, an invitation to reason.

Catholics Against Hitler

THE JESUITS AND THE THIRD REICH. By VINCENT A. LAPOMARDA, S.J. *The Edwin Mellen Press. 375 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by **Edward Krause**

AT THE BEGINNING of this valuable study, Vincent A. Lapomarda, who is Curator of the Hiatt Collection of Holocaust Materials at Holy Cross College, allows that Catholics have not recounted their share of the World War II legacy very well, to our common detriment.

A part of that legacy is the story of Hitler's animus toward and campaign against the Jesuits. In Nazi circles they were often associated with Jews and other *Untermenschen*. Their schools and properties were confiscated or destroyed, thousands were imprisoned or exiled, and 259 were killed, 152 of these in Nazi concentration camps. The campaign against the Jesuits was, of course, a small part of the Nazi persecution of the Church and of Christianity in general and it is immensely helpful to have at hand the kind of documentation Lapomarda's work supplies. He relies heavily on the recently published but as yet untranslated materials of Ludwig Volk, Ulrich Von Hehl, and Dieter Albrecht of the *Kommission fur Zeitgeschichte* of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria under the inspired leadership of Dr. Konrad Repgen.

As partial explanation for the unbalanced impression many have of "Catholic indifference and inaction," Lapomarda refers to the postwar Stalinist policy in Eastern Bloc countries. The Communist governments that took over these countries after 1945 consistently spread lies to the effect that Catholic authorities had collaborated with the Nazis during wartime occupations. When church leaders sought to correct such false accusations by bringing evidence before the people, they were usually thrown into prison or hunted down as traitors to their country. The result, says Lapomarda, "has been a silence so tight that the truth about much of the heroic efforts of various individuals in the Nazi era has been neglected. . . ." Lapomarda's work is one of the first to breach that silence, especially with regard to the situations in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Baltic states, Yugoslavia, and Russia. He outlines in separate chapters the persecution of the Jesuits and their role in inspiring and sustaining Church resistance in Germany and throughout the different nations of occupied Europe.

In Germany, keen Jesuit intellectuals like Jakob Notges and Anton Koch led the assault on Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Jesuit editors of the journal *Stimmen der Zeit* like Erich Przywara, Gustav Grundlach, and Max Pribilla spearheaded a formidable and consistent intellectual resistance to Nazi propaganda until, after frequent raids, it, along with the more popular Jesuit publications, was shut down by the Gestapo. They continued to assist the Bishops and advise the Vatican until forced into exile. Perhaps nothing infuriated the Nazis more than the publication of Pius XI's encyclical *Mit brennender sorge* (March 1937) with its stern condemnations of totalitarianism and pseudo-scientific racism. The drafting of this courageous document, though primarily in the hands of Cardinal Pacelli, owed much to Jesuit advisors.

In 1935, in the midst of a crackdown on Jesuit schools, the Gestapo sent secret instructions to local police on how to handle the Jesuits. Many like Father Oswald von Neil Bruening, who was largely responsible for drafting Pius XI's encyclical on the rights of labor, *Quadragesimo Anno*, were caught up in the notorious morality and currency trials of 1936-39. At least ninety-three Jesuits were interrogated and variously harassed. Many were exiled, and the order was forbidden to accept new candidates. Three Jesuits were members of the Kreisau Circle headed by Count Helmuth von Moltke. The Jesuit provincial superior, Father Anton Rosch, with the full support of the order's superior general in Rome, was particularly courageous in his will to resist Nazi terror. Held in chains and beaten repeatedly, he was scheduled for execution when he was rescued at war's end by Russian troops.

In France, much underground resistance centered around the Jesuits and their journals *Etudes* and *Témoinage Chrétien*. Yves de Montcheuil, editor of *Etudes* and a professor of theology at the Institute Catholique in Paris, was barbarously shot along with two Jewish doctors while caring for wounded soldiers in the hospital of St. Martin. His successor, Gaston Fessard, an early supporter of Charles de Gaulle and a good friend of the well-known Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, continued his predecessor's policy of courageous resistance to Vichy collaboration with Nazi policy and especially its anti-Semitism.

In Lyons, Fathers Pierre Chaillet and Henri de Lubac, both professors of theology at the Université Catholique de Lyons, edited and wrote for *Témoinage Chrétien*, which in 1942 had a circulation of 50,000. They repeatedly insisted that the persecution of Jews was inseparably an attack on Christianity and in any case intolerable. With their assistance, Cardinals Saliege

EDWARD KRAUSE *is Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Toulouse and Gerlier of Lyons denounced the regime's anti-Semitic laws in pastoral letters and called upon the people to resist. Later, they helped inspire a joint protest written by Cardinal Suhard of Paris and signed by all the bishops of France in July of 1942, which stated, "We are profoundly shocked by the mass arrests and the inhumane treatment meted out to Jews. In the name of humanity and of Christian principle, we resolutely condemn this violation of the inalienable rights of man."

Subsequently, in a pastoral letter, the primate of France instructed French Catholics to refuse to surrender Jews to the authorities and to hide or shelter them when possible. Priests, nuns, and laity were already engaged in a massive rescue effort that saved tens of thousands of Jewish lives. The recent memoirs of the current Archbishop of Paris, Jean Cardinal Lustiger, who was one of those sheltered, and of Father De Lubac richly supplement Lapomarda's account of the Jesuit role in all of this.

In Italy, many of the pope's closest advisors were Jesuits, such as Robert Leiber, his long-time private secretary and a chief mediator in the 1940 conspiracy to overthrow Hitler; Mussolini's friend Tacchi Venturi; John LaFarge, the American Jesuit who helped prepare the draft for a papal encyclical condemning anti-Semitism; Augustin Bea, the pope's confessor and later the popular Cardinal Secretary for Jewish-Christian relations; and numerous others. Major rescue networks were centered in Genoa under the leadership of the Jesuit Cardinal Pietro Boetto, who worked closely with the Jewish emigration agency DELASEM, and in Milan under the leadership of a Jesuit priest who served as Cardinal Schuster's head of the office of religious assistance.

Jesuits hid Jews in the houses and schools of the society throughout occupied Europe, and Lapomarda does a real service in documenting many such efforts, as in the fascinating story of the forty-three Jews concealed by Jesuits in Rome at the Oriental Institute and in the Gregorian University. Altogether, hundreds were hidden in the Vatican and at Castel Gondolfo, the papal summer residence, and thousands in religious houses around Rome. The chief Rabbi of wartime Rome had been sheltered by Jesuits, and he later paid eloquent and generous tribute to Pius XII and his collaborators for their rescue efforts, as did Dr. Raffael Contoni, head of Italy's wartime Jewish Assistance Committee and later president of the union of Italian Jewish communities.

This is but a sampling of the kind of information and documentation Lapomarda's study supplies. In his conclusion, he calls for additional studies of other orders and congregations in the church: the Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Pallotines, Ursulines, and others with similarly proud stories of heroism and resistance yet to be told. Lapomarda's own work, along with that of the Israeli diplomat Pinchas Lapide, *Three Popes and the Jews*, and the eminent Jewish historian Jeno Levai, *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy*, is a good place to start for a fair and sympathetic account of the Catholic side of the unrelenting and often bitter struggle waged during the war years against both Nazi and Stalinist forms of atheistic secularism.

Lapomarda's rich notes lead the interested reader to numerous other sources. Such accounts of the previous generation's struggle to defend and advance authentic religious faith against the scientism, atheism, materialism, hedonism, and despair of the surrounding culture can do much to prepare and strengthen us for our struggles against similar forces in our time.

Talking About Writing

CONVERSATIONS WITH TOM WOLFE. Edited by DOROTHY SCURA. *University Press of Mississippi. 296 pp. $29.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.*

CONVERSATIONS WITH JOHN GARDNER. Edited by ALLAN CHAVKIN. *University Press of Mississippi. 310 pp. $29.95 cloth; $14.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Joseph Schwartz**

BECAUSE TOM WOLFE is a celebrity, there is every reason for him to agree to as many interviews as he can get. Interest in the writer serves to encourage interest in what he has written. Wolfe has produced some widely admired journalistic pieces and one best-selling color-by-number novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. There is a hard-edged intelligence in his work, but it is manipulative, bringing the reporter front and center, like Mike Wallace on television. The question that most seems to interest Wolfe is status—his own not the least.

In the interviews gathered for this collection, Wolfe is full of opinions about fiction, most of them inappropriate. He cannot make himself read Saul Bellow. "I've tried. He leaves me flat." The moral ideas of Dostoevsky "are irrelevant to his work." He opines that his mission is to lead novelists back to realism—defined as a kind of journalism. Like Zola and Sinclair Lewis (apt heroes for him) the novelist should report "the way we live now." Fiction should be more like journalism; journalism should be more like fiction. It is perhaps not surprising that some critics question whether he has succeeded fully in writing either. What he has undoubtedly done well is invent a persona; his true mission is calling attention to that invention.

John Gardner was more than a celebrity, although he started to become one before his premature death at forty-nine. While he was not a major artist, he attracted interest both for his fiction and for his literary criticism. He gave at least 140 interviews in the last ten

JOSEPH SCHWARTZ *is Professor of English at Marquette University. His most recent book is* Hart Crane: A Reference Guide.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years of his life, of which twenty-one are printed in this edition.

One theme predominates. After *On Moral Fiction* was published in 1978, it became the principal focus of his interviews. On the one hand, Gardner wanted fiction to be moral because it could do good for the commonweal only on that condition. On the other hand, he threw over his hereditary Protestantism, leaving morality to stand by itself with no religious base on which to rest. When asked if there was an important religious dimension to his fiction, he replied, "Yes, but *what* religion?"

Moral for Gardner meant "life-giving," which is not so much a definition as an emotional response. A real definition would have bound him. Unencumbered, he could indulge in generalities that committed him only to his own opinion: "Novelists must be heroic in affirming life"; there are such things as "human nature," "universal values," and "a universal human morality." One can see in Gardner's moral scheme a classic instance of secular humanism. As he put it, "Obviously, everything that I write, everything that I think, is a secular version of traditional morality."

In *On Moral Fiction*, Gardner quotes Tolstoy's "What Is Art?" to the effect that art aided by science and guided by religion will help mankind to experience "the feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor." This is the basis of Gardner's theory of moral fiction; it "still seems correct with or without its religious premise." Morality as a principle of art "need not be abandoned when the sky comes to be 'ungoded.' " The Romantic/post-Romantic position remains valid without God or religion to undergird it. Utterly ignoring the devastating failure of the Romantic sensibility in the twentieth century, Gardner echoes Matthew Arnold's hope that literature will serve as an adequate substitute for religion. "Fiction," he says, "is the only religion I have," and he described his fiction as "the making of a new morality."

IN PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES, Gardner argued, poet and priest were one. In modern times, the poet has replaced the priest. "God is merely a word the poet-priest uses to express a synthesis of feelings he cannot otherwise express except by telling stories. . . ." Gardner makes a full commitment to art as icon. It is the artist who discovers the eternal verities of the world. Religion, alas, turns these discoveries into laws and becomes self-righteous. "Religions always have simple answers which exclude people." All religious codes are "too narrowing." Real morality can never be codified. "The whole spiritual world is an irrelevant kind of thing except as a metaphor for values." Art is man's chief weapon against the barbaric forces that would destroy our civilization. T. S. Eliot thought differently. As he wrote in "Poetry and Propaganda," the existence of art surely implies the reality of values, "but that does not take us anywhere, and certainly points to no philosophic theory of value." If we get values from poets, where do they get them?

Gardner's intentions were in the broadest sense often good, but hopelessly lost in an unrestrained enthusiasm that led to sentimentality. And when sentimentality gets the bit in its teeth, it is a terrible and terrifying thing. Gardner's sense that something or other was wrong with fiction was true. Many of our prominent writers have misled us, as Saul Bellow noted in his Nobel Prize address. The connection between public life and literature is often debased. But Gardner's insight was so protean that he could never quite grasp and hold it. R. Burton Palmer has rightly called his passion for moral fiction a *cri de coeur*, which, I think, best explains its compelling strength and its fatal weakness.

These two volumes are part of a series of collected interviews of writers being published by the University Press of Mississippi. They are handsomely done up in paper and hardcover. Despite my firm belief in the principle that one should trust the tale, not the teller, I must conclude that they will be useful to the literary critic and the scholar.

BRIEFLY NOTED

LOVING THE TORAH MORE THAN GOD? TOWARD A CATHOLIC APPRECIATION OF JUDAISM. By FRANS JOZEF VAN BEECK, S.J. *Loyola University Press. 100 pp. $9.95.*

A series of lectures given by a distinguished Dutch-American Jesuit theologian. The book's unusual title is borrowed from that of a 1955 radio lecture given by the French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who himself based it on a Yiddish version of a story by Zvi Kolitz, "Yossel Rakover's Appeal to God." The story emphasizes the point that despite God's silence during the Holocaust, his moral law must nevertheless be obeyed. Levinas built on this point to argue for the superiority of Judaism over Christianity on moral grounds. (Such an argument has its roots in the thought of the great German Jewish philosopher, Hermann Cohen, who died in 1918—and whose wife was murdered at Auschwitz in 1942—although neither Levinas nor van Beeck deals with these roots.) Van Beeck attempts to answer this charge by accepting its basic premise regarding the importance of human moral responsibility but denying its conclusion regarding Christianity's shortcomings. He emphasizes that the Catholic tradition, with which Judaism "is most closely related," teaches much the same thing as Judaism about the active role of human moral responsibility in redemption. One can certainly dispute a number of other points van Beeck makes, both from a Jewish and a Christian point of view. However, the book is an impressive example of theologically serious interfaith dialogue, conducted against the backdrop of the Holocaust (some of whose horrors van Beeck himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MERCER DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE

Watson E. Mills

general editor

with members of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion

— Publication Date July 1990 —

Mercer University Press and the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion announce the forthcoming publication of this valuable classroom and reference tool. The new *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* includes more than 1,100 pages of information for the general Bible reader, clergy, undergraduate, graduate student, and scholar alike. The *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* also features:

- *approximately 1500 articles by more than 200 contributors*
- *outlines of all canonical books*
- *32 pages of full-color illustrations*
- *an additional 32 pages of full-color maps*
- *black-and-white photographs, line drawings, and maps throughout*

Listen to what readers are saying about the Mercer Dictionary of the Bible:

"Mercer University Press is to be congratulated on the offer of this judicious, comprehensive dictionary. I anticipate that it will be well received by those who want to know more about the Bible, and will be both a great help and a standard reference work for many years. . . . In the midst of current controversy about the Bible, this publication stands boldly for sanity, intelligence, and moderation. The book just might guard current conversation against destructive ideologys."

—*Walter Brueggemann,* Columbia Theological Seminary

"The *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* is an up-to-date, thorough, one-volume dictionary of the Bible and related subjects and literature. Encyclopedic in scope, it covers each book of the Bible (including the deuterocanonical books) and most of the Bible's apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, archaeological, and philosophical/theological background. The quality of the articles is first-rate. Scholars, pastors, and church teachers everywhere will find it a welcome and useful tool."

—*George Howard,* University of Georgia

Casebound: Isbn 0-86554-299-6 **$55.00**

Paperback: Isbn 0-86554-373-9 **$27.50**

ORDER FORM

Please send

_____ copies of the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* at **$55.00** per copy (hardback) _____

_____ copies at **$27.50** per copy (paperback) _____

Subtotal _____

Shipping/Handling* _____

TOTAL _____

*Shipping/Handling: for prepaid orders, add $2.50 for first book and $1.50 for each additional book ordered.

Ship to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ Check/Money Order ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Account Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Send orders and inquiries to:

MERCER UNIVERSITY PRESS • 1400 Coleman Avenue • Macon, Georgia 31207

Thank You!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw as a child in Holland), which has so radically challenged Judaism and Christianity, both separately and in relation to one another.

—David Novak

AFTER MODERNITY, WHAT? AGENDA FOR THEOLOGY. By THOMAS C. ODEN. *Zondervan. 224 pp. $14.95.*

The author, a professor of theology at Drew University, has thoroughly revised his important *Agenda for Theology*, published in 1979. That book marked Oden's "coming home" to Christian orthodoxy after having explored, and frequently propounded, some of the theological views that had presumably replaced "dead orthodoxy." *After Modernity* is written in a "postcritical" mode and is a marvelously readable introduction to current theological thought and, more importantly, to the classic Christian tradition. The appearance of this revision under an Evangelical label indicates a welcome openness among some Evangelicals to take Christian history more seriously in interpreting the authoritative Scriptures.

GOD AND EVIL: A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE. By DAVID BIRNBAUM. *Ktav. 266 pp. $19.95.*

A lucid, highly accessible introduction and overview on the subject of theodicy, i.e., the justification or explanation of God's actions in life and history. The conventional questions are posed at the outset: "If God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-merciful, why does (gross) evil befall the innocent, e.g., infants? . . . If God is all-merciful and omnipotent, why does evil exist at all?" Despite its subtitle, this book will be useful to Christians as well as Jews, drawing as it does on a great variety of sources: Jewish, Christian, and other. Within a fairly short space (the actual text—excluding appendices, bibliography, index, etc.—is only 167 pages) the book does an admirable job of placing questions of theodicy within a broader theological framework, though some important matters get treated too briefly and lightly. The author offers his own variation on the notion that God's role in history recedes as human powers increase. There is not much comfort here for the vexation caused by suffering, loss, and evil. On that score, however, theodicy literature as a whole has been unsatisfying, despite the heroic efforts of theologians through the ages to explain why the good suffer and the wicked prosper. It may be that the question of God and evil affords only responses (more or less helpful), but no final answers—at least not in this world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Robert Bellah and Social Democracy

Robert Bellah of the University of California, Berkeley, is surely among the most influential commentators on religion and American public life. In the late sixties he was instrumental in reviving the discussion about "civil religion"—a discussion that still goes on and has, all in all, enhanced our understanding of the problems of moral legitimation in the American social experiment. More recently, Bellah was the lead author of *Habits of the Heart*, which has become one of the most frequently quoted texts when the subject turns to how Americans try to make moral sense of their lives.

The single most persistent theme in Bellah's writing is the relationship between the individual and community. He recently took up that theme again in an address at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), "The Role of the Church in a Changing Society." His intention is to reflect on the meaning of the Revolution of 1989 in Eastern Europe, and to ask what it means, or should mean, for Americans. He announces, "I will take the unpopular position that the triumph of capitalism should lead us not to triumphalism but to self-reflection." One notes parenthetically that—at Berkeley, LSTC, and most everywhere else in the American academy—his is the popular position. The truly unpopular position would be to defy regnant orthodoxies by suggesting that the outcome of the Cold War is, however ambiguously, a vindication of democratic capitalism.

As is Bellah's wont, much of his essay is given over to an attack on what he understands by capitalism. What he understands by capitalism is extreme libertarianism, a "market imperialism" in which every good, including the common good, is consumed by the endless competitive quest for consumer satisfaction. Milton Friedman's wrongheaded indifference to the role of moral judgment in ordering our common life is, for Bellah, of the essence of capitalism. But Friedman is mild compared to those who Bellah thinks are more consistent proponents of capitalism. He cites, for example, Elizabeth Landes and Richard Posner, who advocate a free market in babies in which baby prices would be quoted as prices of soybean futures are quoted. "We may not be surprised," writes Bellah, "that the French speak of American capitalism as *le capitalisme sauvage*, savage capitalism."

Parenthetically again, one notes that French intellectuals talked that way in the 1960s, before the "turn to the right" that led to a warm embrace of democratic capitalism, also in the American mode. More to the point, Bellah's critique of capitalism seems to depend upon his caricature of capitalism. He does not seem to be aware that conservative journals such as *National Review* and conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation are as vigorous as he is in rejecting the libertarianism he deplores. In Charles Taylor's useful phrase (*Sources of the Self*), Bellah's case for social democracy or democratic socialism depends upon his continuing to offer a "depreciatory account" of its alternatives. Such classic pro-capitalist thinkers as Bertrand de Jouvenel (*The Ethics of Redistribution*) were more rigorous than Bellah in their withering critique of "maximizing satisfactions," and of the market as a comprehensive mechanism for ordering social relations. Today, Christian thinkers such as Michael Novak and Robert Benne are giving exhaustive attention to democratic capitalism as a "political economy" that requires the most careful concern for questions of culture, morality, and community. In short, the version of capitalism so enthusiastically, and so cheaply, attacked by Bellah has few defenders outside the superannuated circle of those who mistook Ayn Rand for a philosopher. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not seem to realize that, if social democracy is the alternative to *that* capitalism, William F. Buckley, Jr. is a social democrat. Bellah's capitalism is a straw man that he puts on exhibition in order to define, by contrast, his very popular "unpopular" position.

That is a great shame, because Bellah otherwise has useful things to say about the dangers of radical individualism, and about the importance of community and communities. "We know," he writes, "that without institutional support, without role models and exemplary stories, few people are able to withstand the pressures of consumerism and competition all alone. It is here that all the institutions that embody moral standards are important, and the church in my opinion is chief among them." Precisely. That is what proponents of democratic capitalism such as Michael Novak have been saying for years. That is a key part of the "mediating structures" project that Peter Berger and this writer have been advancing. That is what "old right" conservatives mean when they argue that "the cultural agenda" must have priority in reordering our public life. Controlling one's exasperation, one must ask in a civil manner, Where has Robert Bellah been the last decade and more?

Despite his appreciation of culture, community, participation, and mediating structures, Bellah seems to be stuck, he seems to *want* to be stuck, in the statist mode of social democracy. It appears to be his belief system, and depreciatory accounts must be given of any alternatives that threaten that system. World events are interpreted in a light that supports his commitment. Thus he writes, "The drift in Europe is toward social democracy and not toward savage capitalism." In France? In Britain? In Germany? About the last Bellah writes, "A reunited Germany will in all probability produce a Social Democratic government." And this in the year that East Germans, mainly Protestant, voted overwhelmingly for a conservative alliance led by the Catholic-oriented Christian Democrats of Helmut Kohl. This in a year in which almost all observers agree that elections in Eastern Europe are explained most cogently by the desire of people to move as quickly as possible toward democracy and a market economy, and *away from* any ideology tainted by socialism.

So the question is not only where Bellah has been during the arguments of recent intellectual history; the question is, Where is Robert Bellah now? He tells us. He is, it seems, in a world of half a century ago, in a world that shaped his understanding of "social justice," in a world that gave him the faith that he is determined to keep. After surveying what he views as the emerging triumph of democratic socialism in Europe, he writes: "Even though, after the experience of the last ten years, a return to the American version of social democracy, namely a renewal of the New Deal effort to create a more just and caring society, may seem both unexpected and deeply gratifying, it is an eventuality for which we should prepare with both hope and a degree of prophetic distance." His is the wan hope for a return to the *status quo ante*—for a restoration of the way things used to be.

Robert Bellah is a preacher, and a very effective one. *Habits of the Heart* is a jeremiad. Remove the concluding chapter that is an unconvincing advertisement for democratic socialism, and it is a needed jeremiad. In a free society, warnings against unbridled consumption and unbridled competition are always in order. Whether under the auspices of capitalism or socialism, life that is dominated by the economic factor is deadly. Bellah is right about that, although he fails to see that, as a matter of historical experience, it is the ideology of socialism that has most brutally subordinated everything to the economic. Bellah is also right in understanding that the things that make for a truly human life have little to do with economic self-aggrandizement, and everything to do with communities of memory, allegiance, mutual aid, and transcendent commitment. And surely he is right to say that, among such communities, none is more important than the community constituted by religious belief.

Robert Bellah is an influential thinker, and we should therefore be grateful that he joins many others in saying these important things that will always need saying. When Bellah moves from the cultural to the political and economic, however, he becomes a backward-looking restorationist, nostalgic for the statist solutions of the past. What is required today is a reformist vision of public policies that will empower people to take charge of their lives in their freely chosen communities of allegiance and mutual aid. This way lies the promise of vibrant pluralism replacing the repressive monisms produced by the failed schemes of social democracy. Standing in the way of that promise are habits of the mind shaped by a world that is now definitively, and deservedly, past.

FT

1857 AND 1990

Commonweal, the Catholic lay journal, has been doing some fine editorial opining on the twists and turns of the abortion debate. And that is probably why Governor Mario Cuomo of New York chose that forum to explain in detail some of his own twists and turns on the issue. Like *Commonweal*, we found the Governor's explanation thoroughly disappointing. (Unlike *Commonweal*, we are not so impressed by Cuomo's previous contributions to the moral debate, and we think that New York bishops have challenged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cuomo chiefly because he has challenged them.) The editors respond to Cuomo's explanation with a citation from Lincoln in the debates with Stephen Douglas: "He who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed." With respect to slavery, it will be recalled, Douglas took the position of "personally opposed, but . . ."

Commonweal observes: "As in 1857 with the Dred Scott decision, so in 1990 with *Roe*: our political culture is again caught up in a fierce struggle over whether some human lives can be placed beyond the protection of the law. Public opinion is where it has always been, mostly in the middle, unwilling to have all abortions banned, yet troubled by the availability of abortion virtually on demand, the practical consequence of *Roe*. But, with the *Webster* decision of last July, a question that had seemed closed now appears to be open; the states are in a position to test how far the Supreme Court will reshape its 1973 ruling." In this new situation of legislative possibilities and obligations, the editors ask, "Why hasn't Governor Mario Cuomo stepped forth as a molder of consensus?" The editors cite a number of issues on which they think the Governor has demonstrated "moral wisdom married to rhetorical power." Abortion is not among those issues. "If indeed he takes abortion seriously as a direct assault on life, the tenor of his finely calibrated comments do not finally seem to connect with that reality," the editorial concludes.

FT

The Constitution and Public Theology

Could the U.S. Constitution be written today? If not, why should we order public life in accord with a document whose presuppositions we no longer accept? These are among the questions usefully raised by Max Stackhouse of Andover Newton in an essay dealing with the Bill of Rights (*An Unsettled Arena*, White and Zimmerman, eds., Eerdmans). Reflecting on the Senate hearings in connection with Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court, Stackhouse suggests that both the conservative ("original understanding") hermeneutic and the liberal ("*Zeitgeist*") hermeneutic for interpreting the Constitution missed the point.

"Neither side," he writes, "seemed to realize that the basic issues of the Constitution are a mixture of religious, moral, and metaphysical presuppositions that, in combination, illumine the most reliable bases of public polity and policy. We may call that combination 'public theology.' What it points to is ignored (or held suspect) by the most influential theorists and by the most active groups of our day. Indeed, one crisis of America today is this: if we did not have the Constitution, we would not be able to write one because the most vigorous intellectual and sociopolitical forces press in directions opposed to precisely those presuppositions that made the Constitution possible. They have, in many ways, been deconstructed."

What Stackhouse means by "public theology" has to do with basic, and sometimes vague, ideas about God, human nature, power, and history. They are among the truths that the Founders deemed to be "self-evident." Such public theology is to be carefully distinguished from "confessional theology," for it is deliberately unspecific about doctrine, although, to be sure, indisputably drawn from the biblical substance of Western civilization. Stackhouse writes, "I am not, of course, arguing that those who wrote the Constitution were consciously thinking of theology in the way it might be taught in a seminary. . . . I am suggesting that key presuppositions about God, the world, and the basic character of 'covenant' (but neither *le contrat social* nor the *Zeitgeist*) provided the background beliefs of those who drafted the Constitution; that they had been vigorously debated for several centuries so that they had become 'second nature'; and that they were shared by the people in the colonies enough that they would agree to accept what they rendered as true, just, and practicable."

In almost every field, certainly including law, the "hermeneutics of suspicion" has gained the upper hand. When the Founders said "We hold these truths," it is asserted today, they were less interested in truths than in rhetorical justifications for certain power relationships. Even if they did mean what they said about "God and all that," others observe, we cannot mean it today. The Founders claimed those truths sharply limited the sphere of government, keeping it under a transcendent judgment that was to be more fully articulated in the "private" (read non-governmental) sphere. But, Stackhouse argues, if their principles "are not valid, and hence deserve to be forgotten, then the reason for honoring the Constitution becomes moot, and the idea of constitutionalism as governance by laws rather than by arbitrary power proves to be a false one." The conclusion, he suggests, is inescapable: "We should then throw our energies into the naked struggle for power, for then everything private is politicized and politics becomes fateful for every private possibility. The strong, the rich, the unscrupulous will win, and nothing could or should constrain them. If that is the way things really are, the quest for a reliable hermeneutic—in politics, in jurisprudence, in theology—is at best a ploy to mask private interests."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stackhouse ends on a note of rather wan hope. "It is questionable whether we have a Constitution that can endure if the people are not convicted about the validity of the principles on which it is based."

Bias of Modernity

Of course "the people" today undoubtedly do share the basic presuppositions of the Founders. At least the overwhelming majority do. The hermeneutics of suspicion is promoted by a relatively small leadership sector, also in the courts and law schools. There are dangers, however, in encouraging a populist uprising of "the people" against their presumed betters. Stackhouse is on the right track in arguing in a forceful and scholarly manner for a new appreciation of constituting presuppositions. But it may be a mistake to call those presuppositions theology, even if one emphasizes that it is public rather than confessional theology.

The term public theology is accurate enough, but it runs headlong into the formative bias of modernity. More than anything else, modernity defines itself in sharp distinction from religion. To be modern is to be secular. Sometimes that maxim assumes a militantly antireligious expression, more often it means that religion is firmly confined to the private sphere of life. If there is to be a hopeful move toward "postmodernity," it will likely be effected not by calling intellectual leaderships to embrace public theology but by firmly nudging them toward greater reflectiveness about their moral, and even metaphysical, presuppositions.

To be sure, rigorous intellectual reflection on the nature of moral "goods" may well result in reflecting on the Good, and then they will indeed be doing public theology, although probably not calling it by that name. Yet the gravamen of Stackhouse's argument is surely correct: If we do not share the presuppositions of the Constitution, the moral authority of the Constitution has been eviscerated. *Stare decisis*, the authority of precedent, is an important rule for judicial decisions, but it cannot serve as the foundation of justice itself. Those who framed and ratified the Constitution believed that it was just by the lights of their publicly articulated presuppositions about God, human nature, and the way the world works. When those lights are extinguished, it is then true that "the reason for honoring the Constitution becomes moot, and the idea of constitutionalism as governance by laws rather than by arbitrary will and power proves to be a false one."

FT

GOD AND THE MARKET

We don't have anything quite like it south of the border. The Christian Labour Association of Canada is a nationwide network of believers who hope to be a leaven in that country's thinking and practice about the connections between ethics, business, and labor. In its publication, *The Guide,* Ed Vanderkloet, one of the editors, reflects on legitimate and illegitimate interventions in the market. "Many years ago there was a man who belonged to the same church as I did and who started a grocery store. He became rather indignant when fellow church members did not buy his groceries, and he appealed to St. Paul's admonition that we should do good 'especially to those of the household of faith.' Meanwhile his prices were consistently higher than those at Dominion and A&P. In effect this man was turning the church community into a business relationship. And that is a rather dubious business.

"It is true that the market is not a deity that infallibly determines the right price and just wages. It does not ensure human happiness and social justice. Human intervention is often a God-given duty. We are called to do justice, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, says the Book of Micah. But market forces are nevertheless very real and we ignore them at our own peril, as the Communists have found out. That even applies to the labour market. If we do, we simply price ourselves out of the market.

"We should affirm our belief in a free market, just as we must insist on a free family, a free church, a free country, a free press, a free labour union, and free enterprise. As long as we remember that these free institutions turn into instruments of injustice and oppression when people forget their mandate to use those freedoms for the service of God and neighbour."

FT

CHRISTIANS VS. CHRISTIANS

A current story of world-changing proportions is the dramatic growth of conservative Protestantism in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World. The Latin American case is detailed in David Martin's *Tongues of Fire* (Blackwell), which will receive further notice in these pages. It is widely accepted that in the very near future Guatemala will become the first Latin American country with a Protestant majority. To the alarm of Roman Catholic hierarchs and liberation theologians alike, at least twenty-five million Brazilians have in recent years left the church to join what Catholic authorities pejoratively call "the sects." The rapidly growing number of Evangelicals in Peru

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

played a critical role in advancing the political fortunes of recently elected president Alberto Fujimori. And so the story unfolds across the continent.

The phenomenon was highlighted also in Pope John Paul II's visit to Mexico this past May. The 1990 census is expected to show that, of eighty-six million Mexicans, at least six million are Protestants. Whereas being Catholic is often a nominal factor in the Mexican cultural package, the Evangelical converts tend to be better educated, harder working, and eager to evangelize their fellow citizens. It is likely that Roman Catholics are already a minority in some states of Mexico. John Paul II repeatedly took note of these changes during his visit. In a Mexico City suburb, he urged listeners to seek "a more solid training in the truths of our Catholic faith so as to form a front against the solicitations of the sects and groups that try to pull you away from the true fold of the Good Pastor." In Villahermosa he declared that no Catholic in Mexico "can consider himself exempt" from the duty to bring defectors back to the church. "I would like to meet with you one by one to tell you: come back to the fold of the church, your mother," the Pope said.

Other Roman Catholic leaders are less polite in addressing this new situation. They accuse the Evangelicals of being a front for the CIA, the Rockefellers, and other putative masters of Yankee imperialism. "The Yankees are interested in changing the mentality of the Mexican, and that's why they are starting with the most profound, the religious, mentality," says Bishop Javier Lozano Barragan of Zacatecas. "The sects are the vanguard of an effort to change Mexican culture." To which the Evangelical and Fundamentalist churches respond that it is the church of Rome that depends on outsiders for identity, authority, and financing. In visiting a country, the Pope almost always includes an "ecumenical encounter." In Mexico, the Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans, Greek Orthodox, and Jewish communities were invited, but "the sects" were very pointedly excluded. "You do not have dialogue with bandits," Bishop Lozano explained.

The explosion of conservative Protestantism draws mixed reviews in this country. Liberals in the oldline churches deplore this turn of events because, they complain, the passion for social justice is replaced by "pie in the sky" piety. That is a longstanding liberal complaint against Evangelicalism in this country as well, although it tends to make less sense as Evangelicals here, as in Latin America, become more politically assertive. In reality, the dispute is over very different understandings of terms such as social justice. At a recent conference in Washington, John O'Sullivan, editor of *National Review*, offered a different perspective. "I am a Catholic," said O'Sullivan, "so I have to have mixed feelings about the growth of Protestantism in Latin America. But these people get up in the morning, they go to work, they take care of their children, and they're faithful to their wives. So I expect that, all in all, the growth of Protestantism is a good thing for Latin America." Similarly, Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute, also a Catholic, has long held the view that Latin America needs a strong dose of what Max Weber called the Protestant (meaning Calvinist) work ethic.

The Ecumenical Obligation

In addition to the political and economic implications of Protestant expansionism in Latin America, some difficult ecumenical questions are raised. Referring to "the separated brethren" as bandits would seem to fit neither the letter nor the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. It is possible that the non-Roman churches of more "respectable" lineage (e.g., Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran) feel almost as threatened by "the sects" as do the Catholics, although in Latin America they have a great deal less to threaten. In the last quarter century these churches have developed in-depth dialogues with Rome, aimed (however remotely) at ecclesial reconciliation. It would be sociologically understandable, but theologically problematic, if in the Third World these more established churches formed a kind of *de facto* alliance with Catholicism against the Evangelicals (including those Evangelicals who call themselves Fundamentalists).

At the same time, in facing Catholicism, there is no doubt that the new Protestants are in the attack mode, not the dialogue mode. That is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. They call Rome the Whore of Babylon and Rome calls them sectarian bandits, and the hostility mounts from there. It is a sorry but perhaps inevitable fact that faiths that are on the offensive need a clearly defined enemy, and for Evangelicals in Latin America that enemy is Catholicism. The competition between Catholics and Evangelicals, one can hope, might lead to a renewal of Christian faith and life in Latin America. Most Catholics recognize that the "culture Catholicism" of that continent has long been sheltered from challenge, and has, as a consequence, fallen into slovenly ways. Competition leading to renewal, however, is the long-term hope. The more immediate prospect is an escalation of mutual hostilities.

Rome has a particular obligation to urge Catholic leaders in Latin America not to let the hostilities swamp the church's commitment to Christian unity. We say that that is Rome's particular obligation because, unlike most Evangelicals, Catholicism has a developed doctrine of the Church (an ecclesiology) that entails a comprehensive ecumenical claim. Catholicism cannot have one ecclesiology and ecumenical agenda for Europe and North America, where establishment Protestantism is friendly, and another for those parts of the world where Catholicism is under attack. If Catholicism does not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keep the idea of Christian unity alive in Latin America, it will surely become the victim of growing hostilities between Christians. That said, however, the prospect would seem to be one of growing hostilities in the years ahead. It will perhaps take decades for Evangelicalism in Latin America to feel secure enough to even think about the imperatives of ecumenism. The hope is that those imperatives will not have been entirely forgotten when that time comes, if that time comes.

FT

WHAT IF?

Of the proposing of historical "what ifs" there is no end. And a good thing, too. Pondering "what ifs" is a good antidote to historical determinisms, reminding us of the contingency (and, maybe, providential guidance) in human affairs. Pondering "what ifs" is not the chief purpose of Heiko Oberman's remarkable new book, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (Yale), but it is useful also for that purpose. Oberman joggles conventional wisdoms on a number of scores. For instance, it is commonly said that one of the consequences of the Lutheran Reformation was to put the church under the control of the princes rather than the control of Rome. Oberman makes a different argument: "The supreme ecclesiastical authority of the German prince was not a result of the Reformation, as is often claimed: it preceded the Reformation and provided the cradle for its early emergence and ultimate survival."

The contest for ecclesiastical control, says Oberman, was not between the princes and Rome but between the princes and the emperor. The emergence of a German identity, including a national church loosely in communion with Rome, was "sacrificed to a medieval imperial dream." The Hapsburg emperors—from Frederick III through his son Maximilian I to the latter's grandson Charles V—succeeded in dividing the German princes by pitting nationalism against the princes' desire for gain from imperial glory. At one point, the princes were planning to hold a national council to address the issues raised by the Luther controversy, and here enters the intriguing "what if."

"If a German church assembly had actually taken place in Speyer in 1524, the explosive force of reformation would in all probability have been channeled into a reform program and thus defused. Priests would have been granted permission to marry and laymen to receive the chalice. Church taxes would have been nationalized, and Rome most likely excluded from ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Germany. Of course all this would have been no more than the treatment of symptoms, in the Erasmian spirit of peaceful piety and communal concord. The Gospel of the Cross, which Luther had discovered for a Church persecuted, would have been silenced in the ensuing atmosphere of reasonable compromise and pious reform zeal. Yet it was the emperor's religious policy [in preventing such a German council] that—contrary to its own objectives—enabled the powers Luther had unleashed to bring about radical change in theology, the Church, and the balance of power in Europe."

Had things gone differently, what might have been the consequences for Germany, Europe, the church, and Western civilization? There are many who might think that Oberman's speculative scenario would have been a happier course than what did happen. In any case, the nice thing about asking "what ifs" is that we don't need to know the answers.

FT

THE GIFT OF JACQUES ELLUL

Few people have had such a positive influence on Christian thought in the last thirty years as Jacques Ellul, now retired professor of law and sociology at the University of Bordeaux. Author of more than forty books, Ellul's work on technology and his theological arguments drawing on the thought of Karl Barth have usually cut against the grain with a creative abrasiveness that is hard to ignore. Now we have *What I Believe* (Eerdmans), a kind of summing up of what Ellul understands himself to have been saying over all these years.

The essays range widely, from the perils of the computerized mind to what the book of Revelation has to say about the connections between the city of man and the City of God. Some orthodox Christians will be provoked, others will no doubt be entirely put off, by Ellul's argument for "universalism," the belief that, ultimately, all will be saved. But it is an argument very much worth engaging. On this and other subjects, Ellul is nothing if not straightforward. He discusses, for instance, the false religions (mainly political) in which millions have sought "meaning" in this century. He deplores the influence of the nineteenth-century philosopher, Ludwig Feuerbach, and of his many imitators who claim that the Christian understanding of God is merely a projection of human desires, aspirations, or values. The claim that God is an absolutized value "was simplistic and puerile," Ellul writes. "For one thing, we have no idea of what the absolute or the infinite is. We cannot say anything about it or assimilate it. To talk about an absolutized value might be to talk about God, but it is not possible for human beings to absolutize anything."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

According to Ellul, the only God who can be known is the God of revelation. "In regard to the innumerable attacks made upon God, we may simply say that those who make them do not know what they are talking about. Often with just cause they are attacking the image of God that in a given time and place people have made. But this is their own image of God, made for convenience—it is not God. A commonly repeated formula that is now accepted as self-evident is that we have made God in our own image. But to say this is not to know what one is saying; it is childish prattle. For if God is God, then all that we can say about him is just our own approximation or perception, as when a child takes a pail of seawater, stirs it until it foams, and then says he is carrying the ocean and its waves. On our own we know nothing about God. Only when he chooses to reveal a tiny part of his being do we achieve a tiny knowledge and recognition. In this revelation God has to put himself on our level of apprehension, on our cultural and intellectual level, if what he wants to communicate is to be accessible. Thus there are variations, not because God is variable, but because those whom he addresses are. He uses the most appropriate means to establish communication with us—the word."

FT

The Anti-Cult Business

In court cases around the country, people are claiming damages for being "brainwashed" or "coercively persuaded" by various cults, or new religions. The Unification Church ("Moonies") has been especially hard hit in such cases. To their credit, most of the "established" churches in the country, guided by Dean Kelley of the National Council of Churches, have strongly defended the "free exercise" rights of new religions under the First Amendment. Nonetheless, the anti-cult business is thriving. In the lead are groups such as the American Family Foundation, which publishes the *Cultic Studies Journal: Psychological Manipulation and Society*. Social scientists and psychologists, such as Margaret Singer and Richard Ofshe of the University of California, Berkeley, do well in giving "expert testimony" in cases involving alleged brainwashing.

H. Newton Malony of Fuller Theological Seminary takes exception to what is going on. "The *truth* of the Christian faith does not need preservation by attacks on other religions which are framed in sociological or psychological terms. This does not mean that I think that violations of civil and criminal law do not occur in religious groups, old or new. The freedom of religion . . . does not protect a religion from the law of the land. However, I am convinced that so called 'cults' have a right to exist and that they are innocent until proven guilty. I feel sure that, while the readers of *Cultic Studies Journal* might disagree with much that I have said, they would agree that where sociologists and psychologists are asked to testify in cases where religions are being accused of transgressions, they should only do so with the widely standardized procedures of their discipline and should not present themselves as experts if they have made prior judgments about the guilt or innocence of the accused group."

The problem is the corruption of academe when biases are dressed up as "scientific expertise." The even greater problem is the implicit invitation to the courts to adjudicate between voluntary and involuntary, authentic and coerced, religious commitment. Courts that accept the invitation are inevitably entangled in the business of regulating religious belief and practice, precisely what the First Amendment forbids. Unless the present pattern is checked, no religious community is safe from the demand for legal damages from disaffected members. In addition, the notion that individuals, especially adults, are not responsible for the decisions they make can only further erode the basis of civil society. The anti-cult business is bad for religion and bad for the public order. It says it is opposing prejudice, fanaticism, and hysteria, but it is in fact part of the disease for which it claims to be the cure.

FT

The Truth, You Say

A philosopher friend comes up with an intriguing idea. He offers it in a whimsical mode, but he may be on to more than he suspects. His idea has to do with the ideas of another philosopher, Richard Rorty of the University of Virginia. Rorty advances the view that we ought to give up our bad habit of trying to determine what is "true" in the sense of what statements correspond with reality. Truth, Rorty suggests, is what our peers let us get away with saying. This, says the aforementioned friend, makes available a number of interesting possibilities. Operating by Rorty's notion of truth, for instance, a good way to get rid of war and violence is to bring it about by whatever means (bribery might be one way) that our peers will let us get away with saying that there isn't any such thing; for then it would be true that there isn't any such thing, and then of course there wouldn't be any such thing. The same, he elaborates, goes for disease, poverty, hell, and the national debt. He suspects that most philosophical peers would not require a bribe of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much more than $10,000 or so to permit the administration to get away with saying that there is no national debt but, instead, a national surplus of, say, four trillion dollars. Thus, for a national investment of a couple of million we could realize a return of some five trillion. And all this, he indicates, could probably be done in a couple of months. But our friend goes on to note that, since many of Rorty's peers will not let him get away with saying that truth is what our peers let us get away with saying, it turns out that what Rorty says truth is is false. So it seems that the national debt, along with the other unpleasant realities mentioned, is still with us. If the reader finds all this impossibly confusing, take it up with Richard Rorty.

FT

THE GOSPEL OF THERAPY

Evangelical commentator Ken Myers finds himself in Christian bookstores from time to time, and he is not always happy with what he comes across there. For instance, there is this rash of "codependency" publishing—apparently countless books offering techniques and "steps" for correcting one life disorder or another. Myers writes: "Even if these books weren't theologically dubious, they have more subtly destructive effects. Codependency thinking shares the modern infatuation with technique. Most self-help books, Christian or otherwise, suggest that it is a suitable goal to strive to become a *technician* of the inner life. The scientism of modern times has infected even devotional literature of our day, as the life of the spirit (and life *in* the Spirit) is reduced to formulas, neat diagrams, and twelve-step plans. 'Functional rationalization' is what the sociologists call it, this conceit that all of life can be systematized into a set of interlocking flow-charts."

Myers acknowledges that some people may really be helped by all this, at least in the sense that they feel better and believe they are better able to cope. But, being one of those stubbornly orthodox types, he doesn't think that's enough. While not every psychological or emotional disturbance is really a spiritual problem, he writes, it is certainly false to think "that sin is simply an addiction and that redemption is simply a matter of therapy." Then, in a vein that Augustine might appreciate: "Obviously the Church has not been successful in communicating to our therapeutically minded culture that Christians do *not* see redemption as a process of self-actualization or healing, but as the *objective* work of Jesus Christ, applied spiritually and sovereignly. Codependency theory says that my inner self is really alright; it's just that this disease, this addiction, this alien, *other* thing, caused by *other* people, is keeping my true self from thriving. Christianity teaches that if my true self had its way, it would destroy God. My bad habits are as much a part of my self as my good habits, habits being (as classical Christianity understood) the preferred habituation of *my will*." In other words, being ourselves is not the solution to the way we are. The solution, as odd as it may seem, is dependency upon the radically Other who is for us. But a culture shaped by "the triumph of the therapeutic" (Philip Rieff) is powerfully resistant to that proposition.

FT

HIDDEN MOTIVES

It used to be—with people like Plato and Aristotle, for instance—that arguments were thought to have a kind of vertical "lift" or "pull" to them. Lift or pull would cause someone to assent to an argument, the argument had a "cause" in the sense of mind meeting truth and being drawn to it. This lift or pull, says Wayne Booth of the University of Chicago (*Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*), was distinguished from horizontal "push" provided by historical or biological forces. But now, writes Booth, "motivism" has taken over—everything is to be explained by hidden motives of push. He explains: "Popularized versions of Marxism and Freudianism and positivism have spread the dogma to the 'intellectual masses' who take up ideas in novels, political controversy, middlebrow magazines, and freshman English anthologies. By now it has almost scriptural force: in the beginning was not the word but the causal chain, and his name was sometimes Chemistry and sometimes Drive or Desire, but never Lift or even Pull. And it came to pass that Error was born, and his chosen name was Reason, but his real name was Rationalization. And Rationalization and its wicked prophets did undertake to undermine Push, claiming that reasoning about values, about purposes, could alter Push's unalterable path. But the true prophets were able to unmask the wicked prophets, showing that their vaunted reasonings were themselves clearly dictated by Push. And, lo, there was nothing that anyone could say about anything that could not be unmasked and shown to be truly another manifestation of Push's eternal power. And when men did engage in debate about their deepest concerns, they found that each man could say unto his brother, Racca, thou fool."

FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Albert Shanker's Legacy

Of policy proposals that might assist the urban poor and provide a measure of greater justice for all parents and children in this society, few have the attractiveness of educational choice. Educational choice, if we are realistic about it, means breaking the public school monopoly on government funds. Vouchers and tuition tax credits are among the possible ways of advancing such a major reform. Regrettably but understandably, genuine choice is rigorously opposed by a floundering educational establishment. Enter Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Shanker is one of the more decent and thoughtful people in American public life. He is at that point in his life, however, where it seems that he cannot bring himself to break from the increasingly indefensible cause in which he has made his career.

That cause is protecting the monopoly on government money for the sake of unionized teachers who are increasingly demoralized by the failed enterprise that is public education. To be sure, the failure is hardly universal. Perhaps a majority of American parents are, whether or not they should be, reasonably satisfied with the public schools their children attend. More affluent Americans do have educational choice, and they routinely exercise it by choosing to live in communities with better schools. The public school teachers of the urban poor also exercise a choice by sending their own children to religious or other non-government schools. It is the millions of lower-income people in cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles who have no choice. Their children go where they are told, which means to bureaucratically stagnant institutions in which teachers have little incentive to care about parental concerns or student progress.

The public school system of New York City has about a million pupils. Mr. Shanker, among others, regularly acknowledges that those schools are tragically failing both children and parents. Of a hundred children entering first grade, it is likely that ten, maybe fifteen, will leave high school with an education that prepares them for college or for a job that requires minimal literacy. There is no serious argument about the facts. The astonishing thing is that there is not more public outrage over the scandal the facts reflect. Any other enterprise that failed to achieve its stated goal 85 or 90 percent of the time would be the object of powerful demands for reform. One important reason, maybe the most important reason, why that does not happen in this case is that the people who are in the best position to make effective demands do not send their children to the government schools in question. In addition, the political army of unionized teachers has a deep vested interest in maintaining the present system, no matter what the human cost paid by the children and families of the poor.

Mr. Shanker's union buys space for his weekly column in the *New York Times*. The column is titled "Where We Stand." Mr. Shanker and his union stand pat. In a recent installment, he discusses, once again, the failure of the schools and the need for reform. Once again he makes clear that "reform" means more money for going on with business as usual. Mr. Shanker apparently does not see the sad humor in his ending the column by quoting from a piece he wrote twenty years ago: "If we are to have educational reform and a responsible program of accountability, we need . . . a long-term commitment of funds from federal, state, and city government so that educators, parents, and community groups can devote themselves to school improvement instead of the unrelenting battle to hold on to what they already have." It is, however, only the educators who are trying to hold on to what they have. Moreover, in the last twenty years, billions of dollars in additional money have been poured into the public schools in our urban areas. It becomes painfully obvious that there might be an inverse relationship between increased expenditure and educational performance.

It is not that Mr. Shanker and his unionized teachers are bad people. On the contrary, we expect that most teachers would welcome an alternative to the bureaucratically overloaded system that works for incompetents and timeservers rather than students. By respecting and nurturing the role of parents and families in education, schools of choice would help rebuild the infrastructure of communities on the edge of disintegration. The many arguments for such a long overdue reform are by now well known. The chief "argument" against reform is that it is assumed that it would reduce the security and power of unionized teachers. Having stood pat for decades, Albert Shanker could now crown his career by taking a stand for realistic reform. Because he is a decent man, we cannot imagine that he is satisfied with leaving as his legacy a system that pits the interests of the union against educational freedom and achievement. It is not worthy of him to spend his remaining active years as an apologist for the conservative ideology of a counterproductive state enterprise and its client groups.

FT

Sources of Judgment

One can be sure that the complaints about the "intrusion" of religion in the abortion debate will continue to abound. And they never abound so abundantly as when the subject turns to the Roman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Catholic bishops. The subject then makes a nice excuse for venting anti-religious bias in general, plus a narrowly stifling view of "church-state separationism," and all seasoned with the anti-Catholicism that is almost the last bigotry left to respectably sensitized Americans. Charles Krauthammer, as is his wont, cuts through the obscurantisms very nicely. First he notes, as many others have, that the bishops are hardly "imposing" anything on Catholic public officials who are, after all, Catholic by choice. Second, the "hypocrisy" of those who cheer the bishops' public intervention on some questions (civil rights, economics, nuclear policy) but condemn the bishops when they speak out on abortion comes in for some incisive treatment. But especially well put, we thought, was this reflection on the sources of moral judgment in a democracy: "The other liberal complaint is that since the Catholic position on abortion is religiously derived, if it ultimately becomes law, that constitutes an imposition of religion. This argument is nonsense too. Under American concepts of political pluralism, it makes no difference from where a belief comes. Whether it comes from church teaching, inner conviction, or some trash novel, the legitimacy of any belief rests ultimately on its content, not on its origin. It is absurd to hold that a pro-abortion position derived from, say, Paul Ehrlich's overpopulation doomsday scenario is legitimate, but an antiabortion position derived from Scripture is a violation of the First Amendment. The provenance of an opinion has nothing to do with its legitimacy as a contender for public opinion—and as candidate for becoming public law."

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ At the end of March, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin offered once again a major reflection on the abortion debate and moral/political responsibility. The reporter for *America*, the Jesuit magazine, was generally favorable, indeed effusive. The Cardinal's address was "incisive," "brilliant," "a fine contribution," and succeeded "admirably." He notes the way in which Bernardin made clear that the slogan, "Government shouldn't interfere with your choice," hides the more sinister reality, "Moral judgments and legal arrangements shouldn't interfere with your taking innocent human life." Nonetheless, *America* is worried about the way the Cardinal "tracks back and forth across the liberal/conservative spectrum." Bernardin said, "Many Catholics, politicians and ordinary citizens, will disagree on strategies of implementation to lessen and prevent abortions." *America* calls that a liberal statement. Bernardin also said, "The position of a public figure who is personally opposed to abortion, but not publicly opposed in terms of any specific choices, is an unacceptable fulfillment of a public role." That, says *America*, is conservative. Whatever conservative and liberal mean in this context, it would seem that the Cardinal is simply being consistent. How, pray tell, can politicians "lessen and prevent abortions" without opposing "specific choices" to abort? Once again, *America* exhibits an excessive eagerness to protect politicians from the consequences of what they profess to believe.

■ What is the point at which an opinion achieves the status of being a monolithic orthodoxy? The folks at Harvard and Radcliffe sent out a questionnaire to the class of 1965, and received 778 returns. Among many other questions, people were asked where they stand on disputed public issues from sanctions against South Africa to the use of nuclear power. On only two issues did agreement reach as high as 90 percent. Eighty-eight percent of Harvard alumni and 98 percent of Radcliffe favor handgun control. The other issue, of course, is abortion. Ninety-two percent of Harvard and 96 percent of Radcliffe favor the "legal right to abortion." A combined 3 percent are undecided, and 5 percent opposed. And yet people persist in talking about the alleged gap between our elite educational institutions and the American people. (One statistic we can't figure out is that 22 percent of the Harvard alumni say they are remarried, while only 17 percent report that they have been divorced or widowed. Is bigamy making a comeback in our leadership class?)

■ The governing board of the National Council of Churches has met again. The council's Commission on Family Ministries and Human Sexuality proposed a statement calling on church leaders to name family violence as a sin and refer abuse victims to the police. "The most dangerous place for a child to grow up is in the family, and the most dangerous place for a woman is in a relationship," said the Rev. Marie Fortune on behalf of the Commission. Compared to what? you may well be tempted ask. Don't.

■ Our colleague Jean Bethke Elshtain recently moved from the University of Massachusetts to Vanderbilt. She writes about the perdurance of unabashed anti-Catholicism in that institution and that part of the country. But she is by no means discouraged. "In my view . . . this remnant of old-style nativism is an anomaly. When I moved to Nashville, many of my Northeastern friends thought I was heading toward that place on ancient maps where the known world ends and *terra incognita* begins; where, the mapmakers believed, 'there be dragons.' Yet on a number of issues, especially race, the New South is far

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ahead of what might be called, at this point, the Old North. With demographers and political observers reporting that a reverse migration of blacks back to the South is now occurring, the contrast between North and South on race questions will tilt even more in favor of the New South."

■ *On a Wink from God* and *The Pretzel Man & Other Dutch Country Pomes* are two little books of poetry printed back to back in one volume. They are by Lutheran pastor Bertram Gilbert and, while we do not suggest that Yeats or Eliot should step aside, the poems are very nice indeed. *Wink* probes the corners of familiar biblical stories in sometimes surprising ways. The volume sells for $8.00 and is available from the author: Bertram Gilbert, 409 South Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

■ Excuse us for once again quoting Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia. It is just that he says so many quotable things. The following from an address to the Polish Sejm and Senate illustrates why the Revolution of 1989 in the East may provide wisdom for the cultural rejuvenation of the West: "The most dangerous enemy today is no longer the dark forces of totalitarianism, the various hostile and plotting mafias, but our own bad qualities. My presidential program is, therefore, to bring spirituality, moral responsibility, humaneness, and humility into politics and, in that respect, to make clear that there is something higher above us, that our deeds do not disappear into the black hole of time but are recorded somewhere and judged, that we have neither the right nor a reason to think that we understand everything and that we can do everything.

"I think that the Poles, with their strong religiousness, which is embodied in the admirable person of the Pope whom they have given to the world, can understand my modest presidential intentions."

■ Lift up a rock or, in this case, open the mailbox, and you never know what you'll find. This time it's a mailing from Ichthys Books, published by one Ray M. Jurjevich, Ph.D. of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Ichthys offers "Pro-American and Pro-Christian Books for Strong-Minded and Patriotic People." Included are "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and selected anti-Israel effusions from famed linguist Noam Chomsky. Dr. Jurjevich's enemies list is impressive: "Atheistic Freemasons, Leftist-Liberals, Modernist 'Christians,' Council on Foreign Relations, Bilderbergers, Trilateralists, ACLU, Talmudic Foes of Christ, Jewish Monopolies and Cartels, Christian Zionists, Israel-Firsters," and on and on. The good news is that in his covering letter the bad doctor says he is desperately trying to raise $10,000 to get out his book, *The F.O.J. Syndrome in America.* (F.O.J. stands for "Fear of Jews.") The country is in such pitiful shape, he says, that fearless truth-speakers like himself have to depend on the one-tenth of one percent of the population that is still patriotic. Given his definition of patriotic, patriots should be pleased. (Who or what are Bilderbergers?)

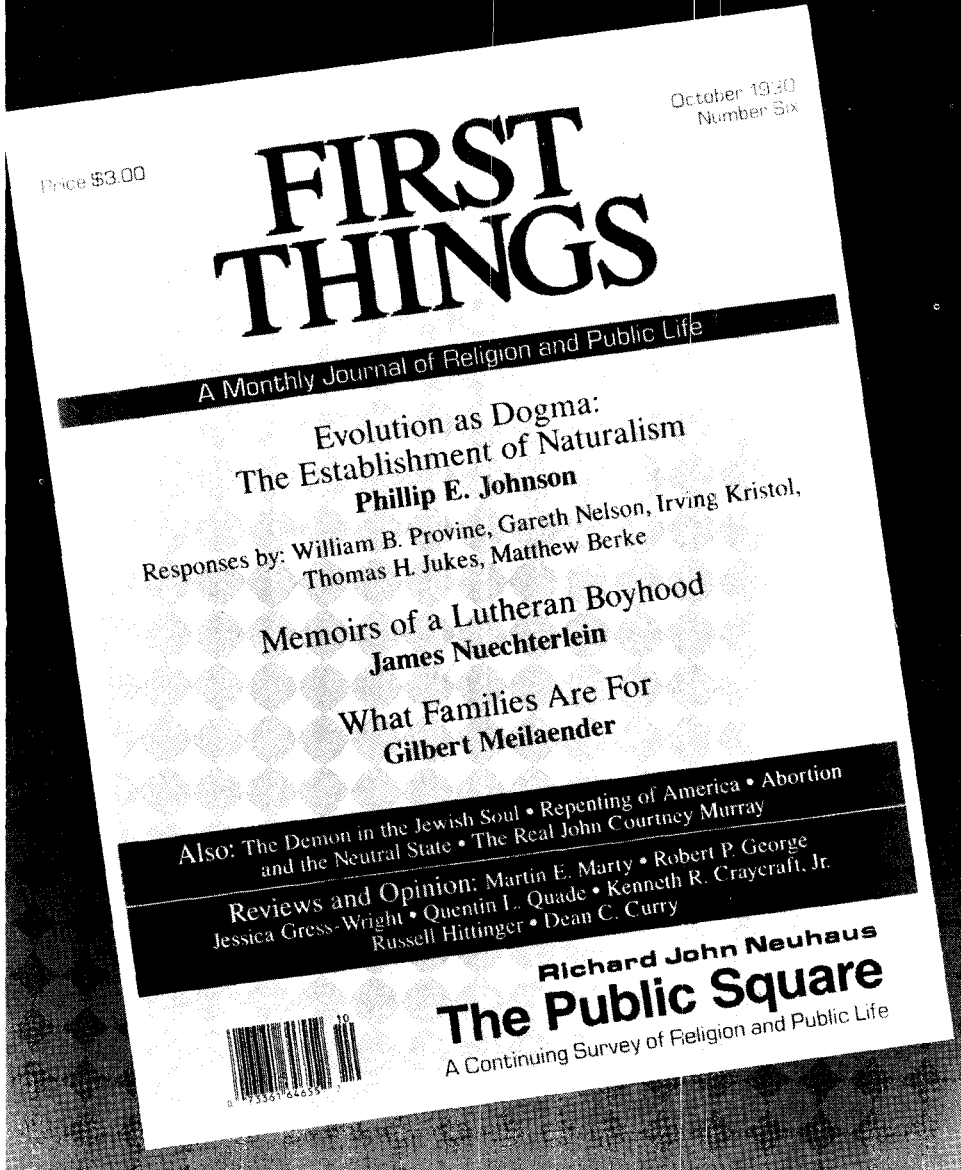
Sources: Bellah essay in *Currents in Theology and Mission*, June, 1990; *Commonweal* on Cuomo, April 6, 1990; Vanderkloet on the market, April 1990; Pope's comments in Mexico, *New York Times*, May 12, 1990; Oberman on Luther, pp. 20, 29; Malony on the anti-cult business, *Cultic Studies Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1989; Myers on gospel of therapy in *Genesis*, 26 Feb. 1990; Booth quoted in *Genesis*, March 12, 1990; Shanker on education, *New York Times*, May 27, 1990; Krauthammer on abortion, *Washington Post*, March 23, 1990; *America* on Bernardin, April 7, 1990; Data on Harvard and Radcliffe from "25th Reunion Questionnaire"; NCC and family violence, *Pittsburgh Times*, May 18, 1990; Elshtain on South and North, *Commonweal*, April 6, 1990; Havel quoted in the *New York Review of Books*, March 29, 1990.

A Personal Note

Many readers are no doubt aware that I was recently received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. I will gladly send to those requesting it a short statement of the theological and ecumenical reasons for this decision. I will continue as Director of the Institute on Religion and Public Life and as Editor-in-Chief of this journal. Be assured that this decision constitutes no change in the mission of the institute and the journal. That mission is to advance, in a thoroughly ecumenical and interreligious manner, a religiously informed public philosophy for societies that aspire to freedom and virtue. —*RJN*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At last, a journal of ideas about religion and public life!


October 1990
Number Six
Price $3.00
FIRST THINGS
A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life
Evolution as Dogma:
The Establishment of Naturalism
Phillip E. Johnson
Responses by: William B. Provine, Gareth Nelson, Irving Kristol,
Thomas H. Jukes, Matthew Berke
Memoirs of a Lutheran Boyhood
James Nuechterlein
What Families Are For
Gilbert Meilaender
Also: The Demon in the Jewish Soul • Repenting of America • Abortion
and the Neutral State • The Real John Courtney Murray
Reviews and Opinion: Martin E. Marty • Robert P. George
Jessica Gress-Wright • Quentin L. Quade • Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr.
Russell Hittinger • Dean C. Curry
Richard John Neuhaus
The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

"The debate about public policy is increasingly calling upon such formerly unfashionable notions as character and virtue and citizenship. The indispensable contribution of FIRST THINGS is to remind America's intellectuals that serious debate on these topics must confront the life of the spirit."

— Charles Murray

"FIRST THINGS is not only a significant but a truly exciting new arrival in American intellectual life."

— Midge Decter

"In the welter of magazines specializing in the ephemeral, FIRST THINGS stands apart by living up to its name. It is unfailingly intelligent, graceful, and lucid."

— Robert H. Bork

Religion is breaking out all over! And FIRST THINGS is here to cover the story.

It's a story connected with some of the most troubling social issues of our time. It's a story stirring the most imaginative intellectual debates of our time.

It's the story found in the pages of FIRST THINGS.

At last there exists a publication that takes you to the heart of today's most critical religious and moral questions. From abortion to bio-ethics to church-state relations FIRST THINGS engages you in a lively and profound conversation about the ordering of our public life.

Discover religion's changing role in our public life by joining in this extraordinary new venture in publishing. Subscribe to FIRST THINGS today.

FIRST THINGS
Ideas for post-secular America

☐ YES. Start my subscription to FIRST THINGS. Send me your next 10 issues for only $24. ☐ Payment enclosed. ☐ Bill me.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

FIRST THINGS • P.O. BOX 3000 • DEPT. FT • DENVILLE, NJ 07834-9848

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MOON AND HEART

Gibbous moon
devoured by our shadow,

gibbous heart
quicker than moons to wane.

High moon or rising,
night's center.

Eccentric heart
tipped sideways like a mango.

Waxing moonlight,
douser
of ever farther
constellations;

waning heart,
douser
of brief
and briefer hopes.

Full moon,

fool heart:

masters
of the one night stand.

E. Castendyk Briefs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Read the magazine that shapes the minds of the people who shape our world.

Discover for yourself the excitement of exploring today's most critical topics with today's most articulate and influential writers and thinkers. Subscribe to Commentary, the magazine that has illuminated every aspect of America's political, social, and cultural life. The magazine for those who take the world, and their role in it, very seriously.

Commentary
The forum for today's most vital issues.

"COMMENTARY is very, very important for the life of the United States, for the West, and, I am convinced, for freedom."
–HON. JEANE KIRKPATRICK

"The affirmation of the West and its values, which was there in the first lines Norman Podhoretz wrote as Editor of COMMENTARY, has never faltered and has hugely strengthened both the West and those values."
–SENATOR DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN

"Norman Podhoretz and COMMENTARY have ennobled this society. They have asked the right questions. They have usually given the right answers."
–HON. HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION

Commentary
165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022

☐ Yes! Please enter my one-year subscription–12 monthly issues–to Commentary for just $39–a full $6 off the newsstand rate. Add $8 for foreign and Canadian subscriptions (U.S. dollars only).

Must reading for today's best informed people.

Name _____ (Please Print)
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Signature _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED